

THE DOMESTIC POLITICS OF WAR -
THE IRAQ WAR DEBATE AS VIEWED THROUGH
THREE DIFFERENT PERSPECTIVES:
DIVERSIONARY THEORY OF WAR, COERCIVE DIPLOMACY,
AND THE “INVITATION TO STRUGGLE” THEORY

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APPROVAL

The undersigned certify that this thesis meets master's-level standards of research, argumentation, and expression.

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DISCLAIMER

The conclusions and opinions expressed in this document are those of the author. They do not reflect the official position of the US Government, Department of Defense, the United States Air Force, or Air University.

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ABSTRACT

Carl von Clausewitz wrote, “War is merely a continuation of policy by other means ... The political object is the goal, war is a means of reaching it, and means can never be considered in isolation from their purpose.” Most academics, military strategists, and leaders understand this to mean using war to coerce adversary states. Rarely do strategists interpret the passage to mean gaining domestic influence or political clout. This study examines the context of the 2002 Iraq war debate through three theoretical perspectives: diversionary theory of war, coercive diplomacy, and the “invitation to struggle.” Proponents of diversionary theory would interpret the debate as a means by which the Bush administration diverted attention from the country’s economic problems in order to gain momentum leading up to the November 2002 midterm elections. Proponents of coercive diplomacy theory would commend the Bush administration for pressing Congress to vote on the Iraq war resolution prior to the midterm elections. Doing so limited opposition and guaranteed overwhelming bipartisan support for the resolution. Support from the political opposition signaled Saddam Hussein and the United Nations that the President had the domestic political capital to follow through on his threat of regime change in Iraq. Advocates of “invitation to struggle” would argue that the debate that ensued and the vocal opposition to the President’s Iraq policy emboldened Saddam Hussein to attempt to shape the debate in the United States and the United Nations to make it difficult for the President to gain consensus over his policy. The thesis uses the theories to help provide strategists a means by which to understand the domestic political context of military policy debates, thus enabling them to influence and shape the debate to achieve favorable political objectives in the domestic *and* international arenas.

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Introduction

During an Associated Press luncheon held at the Waldorf-Astoria Hotel on April 25, 1967, General William C. Westmoreland, Commander of the Military Assistance Command, Vietnam (MACV), spoke of the influence domestic opposition to the war was having on the enemy's war strategy.

I am mindful that the military war in South Vietnam is, from the enemy's point of view, only part of a protracted and carefully coordinated attack, waged in the International arena. Regrettably, I see signs of enemy success in that world arena in [sic] which he cannot match on the battlefield. He does not understand that American democracy is founded on debate, and sees every protest as evidence of crumbling morale and diminishing resolve. Thus, discouraged by repeated military defeats but encouraged by what he believes to be popular opposition to our effort in Vietnam, he is determined to continue his aggression from the North.¹

Three days later, in a speech to a joint session of Congress, the first time in United States (US) history a current field commander was recalled to the states for this purpose, he reinforced the need for full Congressional support for the American effort in Vietnam. Implying that the enemy viewed any opposition, especially from the body to whom he spoke, as a weakening of resolve, Westmoreland was of the opinion that this was the Americans' Achilles heel in its war operations.²

Westmoreland's words about domestic dissent aiding the enemy were controversial at the time, drawing attention to a paradox of the American democratic process. Public foreign policy debates are important in an open society like the US. However, at what point does

¹ "Text of Westmoreland's Address at A.P. Meeting and of His Replies to Questions," *New York Times (1923-Current File)*, April 25, 1967, <http://www.proquest.com> (accessed 8 February 2010).

² "Transcript of the Westmoreland Speech," *New York Times (1923-Current File)*, April 29, 1967, <http://www.proquest.com> (accessed 11 February 2010).

the debate, especially legislative opposition to a sitting President's foreign policy initiatives, "give comfort to our adversaries"?³ Westmoreland said that such opposition influenced the enemy's strategy. Fascination with the idea that adversaries observe political debates inside a rival state provided the inspiration for this thesis. It sought initially to find an answer to the question: How does legislative opposition to a President's stated policy initiatives affect adversary strategy to challenge American policy? As I delved deeper into the research, however, the question I sought to answer evolved. Also meriting consideration were a series of other questions. How does a President use military policy and debate over the policy to influence domestic political rivals? How does a President use military debate to influence international rivals? In addition, how do rivals view this debate and how do they react to it? The thesis argues that in the US, debate over military policy could have several purposes and could result in several effects. The purposes and effects depend upon the perspective policymakers and strategists use to observe the events.

A President may initiate military conflict for political gain. This is a pessimistic view of our leaders and an idea that sounds as though it came straight out of a Hollywood movie script.⁴ However, it is the basis for a political science perspective called the "diversionary theory of war". Proponents of diversionary theory state that leaders demonstrate their leadership competence through their economic policies or through their foreign military policies. If the state faces economic problems, the leader may initiate military conflict to divert attention and demonstrate his leadership acumen to the electorate.⁵

³ Dennis M. Foster, "'Comfort to Our Adversaries'? Partisan Ideology, Domestic Vulnerability, and Strategic Targeting," *Foreign Policy Analysis* 4 (2008): 433.

⁴ *Wag the Dog* was a 1997 movie made about this very subject.

⁵ Charles W. Ostrom, and Brian L. Job, "The President and the Political Use of Force," *The American Political Science Review* 80, no. 2 (June 1986). Ross A. Miller, "Domestic Structures and the Diversionary Use of Force," *American Journal of Political Science* 39, no. 5 (August 1995). Bruce Russett, "Economic Decline, Electoral Pressure, and the Initiation of Interstate Conflict," in

Strategic conflict avoidance is a related perspective. Proponents of this school of thought argue that international rivals constantly observe the adversary's domestic and political conditions. If conditions in the adversary's state give the rival leader impetus to initiate diversionary conflict, the rival will avoid confronting the state, thus removing an incentive to initiate conflict.⁶

A President may initiate debate over his military policy in an attempt to gain credibility with the domestic audience, the international community, and the adversary. This is coercive democracy theory. Advocates of this perspective assert that in democratic states, opposition parties are constantly vying for position within government. Thus, they act to gain the support of the electorate. Their political moves are deliberate and determined by the gains they may achieve with their actions. A leader that gains the opposition's support for his policies signifies that the policy is credible and that the leader has the political capital to carry through with the policy. Therefore, a leader may manipulate the debate to limit opposition and demonstrate his resolve.⁷

A democratic leader's military policy also affects the adversary. Proponents of the "invitation to struggle" theory put forth arguments relating specifically to the US. In particular, they analyze Congress' opposition to a President's military policies. Further, they argue that Congressional opposition to the President's military policies encourages the adversary to challenge the US knowing that he does not have the political capital to carry through with the policy.⁸ Congress has several ways of demonstrating their opposition throughout the foreign policy-

Prisoners of War? Nation-States in the Modern Era, ed. Charles S. and Alan Ned Sabrosky Gochman (Lexington, MA: Lexington Books, 1990).

⁶ Alastair Smith, "Diversionary Foreign Policy in Democratic Systems," *International Studies Quarterly* 40, no. 1 (March 1996). Brett Ashley Leeds, and David R. Davis, "Domestic Political Vulnerability and International Disputes," *The Journal of Conflict Resolution* 41, no. 6 (December 1997).

⁷ Kenneth A. Schultz, *Democracy and Coercive Diplomacy*, Cambridge Studies in International Relations, 76 (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2001).

⁸ Dennis M. Foster, "An 'Invitation to Struggle'? The Use of Force Against 'Legislatively Vulnerable' American Presidents," *International Studies Quarterly* 50 (2006).

making process. They can use the media, Committee meetings, or debate the policy in Congressional chambers to publicize their opposition to the President's policies. This is precisely what happened between in summer 2002 regarding President Bush's Iraq policy.

I examine this debate as a means for supporting my key arguments, analyzing three of the four perspectives presented in this thesis: diversionary theory, coercive diplomacy, and invitation to struggle. I only used three because a fourth perspective, strategic conflict avoidance, did not pertain to the Iraq debate. I tried not to create a chronological history of the events nor replicate other scholar's work by chronicling the principal players' statements during the weeks the debate played out in public. Rather, I attempted to look at the debate's context.

Specifically, I analyzed the domestic conditions in the US at the time to discover if there was specific evidence to support the idea that the President used Iraq to divert attention from economic problems. In addition, I analyzed the timing of the debates in Congress, which took place prior to the critical 2002 midterm elections. The timing highlights the President's political acumen as it limited opposition to his policy. By insisting that Congress vote on the resolution, he demonstrated his resolve and credibility to Americans, Saddam Hussein, and the international community. Finally, I examined the timing of Hussein's actions during the debate. Since Hussein did not have the capability to confront the US militarily and win, he used political statements, the United Nations, and other diplomatic maneuvers as a means to challenge Bush and influence debate in the US.

Why Use the Case Study Approach and Why Use Iraq?

According to Arend Lijphart, one of the greatest advantages of a single case study is that the researcher can focus intensively on this single case even with limited resources available.⁹ There are six types of case studies but only two are related and applicable to the one presented in the thesis: atheoretical and interpretive case studies. Atheoretical case studies are the “traditional single-country or single-case analyses. They are entirely descriptive and move in a theoretical vacuum: they are neither guided by established or hypothesized generalizations nor motivated by a desire to formulate hypotheses.”¹⁰ They are useful as data-gathering methods that contribute directly to theory building.¹¹ Interpretive case studies are similar to atheoretical case studies in that they are selected for an interest in the case rather than an interest in developing theory. Interpretive case studies, however, make use of established theories. “In these studies, a generalization is applied to a specific case with the aim of throwing light on the case rather than of improving generalization in any way.”¹²

This thesis employs an interpretive case study. It uses three political science theories to shed light on the 2002 Iraq debate. Some scholars consider a single case study a weakness because it does not allow researchers to generalize conclusions to other cases. Due to the context of a single case study, a theory may not apply to another case study.¹³ However, applying the conclusions to other similar situations is not the purpose of the thesis. It simply aims to expand understanding of the debate over Bush’s decision to hasten the discussion over Iraq in summer and fall 2002.

⁹ Arend Lijphart, "Comparative Politics and Comparative Method " *American Political Science Review* 65, no. 3 (September 1971): 691.

¹⁰ Lijphart, "Comparative Politics and Comparative Method ": 691.

¹¹ ———, "Comparative Politics and Comparative Method ": 691.

¹² ———, "Comparative Politics and Comparative Method ": 692.

¹³ Bent Flyvbjerg, "Five Misunderstandings About Case-Study Research," *Qualitative Inquiry* 12, no. 2 (April 2006): 224-225.

The thesis uses Iraq as an interpretive case study for several reasons. First, it is an interesting subject to study because it is contemporary and still the subject of many controversies that may not be resolved for decades. Second, there are a great number of primary resources available to research, and any study that analyzes these resources only adds to the body of knowledge available about the subject. However, there are also limitations to using this case study so soon after the event. A large number of documents that may shed additional light on this subject are still classified. Until those are declassified, many questions may remain unanswered. Third, Iraq met the “enduring rivalry” requirement for theories examined here. Enduring rivalries, according to Fordham, include “states with a special historic enmity toward one another that unites particular instances of conflict between them into a broader historical pattern. Many states have had isolated militarized disputes with one another, but enduring rivals are consistently at risk for this kind of conflict.”¹⁴ Rivals, Fordham continued, make easy targets for diversionary uses of force.¹⁵ The relationship between Iraq and the US meets this requirement.

Chapter 1 is a review of the American foreign policy process, which is sometimes free flowing and often depends upon the personalities of the principal characters involved. The review identifies areas where opposition could arise and how outsiders can voice their dissent. It also identifies areas where players outside the President’s inner circle can influence his policy. The section includes narratives to provide an overview of how the Bush administration presented the President’s Iraq policy to Congress and the American people. The section will show that Senators and Congressman, wanting to exert influence in the process, forced the President to solidify his policy. However, the process also

¹⁴ Benjamin O. Fordham, "Strategic Conflict Avoidance and the Diversionary Use of Force," *The Journal of Politics* 67, no. 1 (February 2005): 135.

¹⁵ Fordham, "Strategic Conflict Avoidance and the Diversionary Use of Force," 135.

provided an opportunity for the opposition to voice its dissent, thus providing Hussein an opportunity to challenge the administration.

In Chapter 2, I present an examination of the theoretical perspectives that form the framework for the case study that follows. In chapter 3, I analyze the Iraq debate using the theoretical perspectives discussed in chapter 2. Finally, I provide an analysis of the case studies involved, discuss possibilities for future research, and provide US military strategists some points to ponder when assisting civilian policymakers in the development of military policies.

Clausewitz wrote, “War is merely a continuation of policy by other means ... The political object is the goal, war is a means of reaching it, and means can never be considered in isolation from their purpose.”¹⁶ Most academics, military strategists, and leaders understand this to mean using war to coerce adversary states. There are hundreds, perhaps thousands, of historical case studies to illustrate that understanding. Rarely do strategists interpret the passage to mean gaining domestic influence or political clout. This study does not have direct military relevance to future strategists. The conclusions presented will not provide a strategy to defeat the Taliban, al Qaeda, or any other future adversary. However, it does provide strategists a means by which to understand the domestic political context of military policy debates, thus enabling them to influence and shape the debate to achieve favorable political objectives in the domestic *and* international arenas.

¹⁶ Carl von Clausewitz, Michael Eliot Howard, and Peter Paret, *On War*, Rev. ed. (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1984), 87.

Chapter 1

The United States (US) Foreign Policy Making Process

The limitations imposed by democratic political practices make it difficult to conduct our foreign affairs in the national interest.

Dean Acheson
Former US Secretary of State

A unique feature of American government is the division of powers between the executive, legislative, and judicial branches. This division of powers is especially evident in US foreign policy.¹ The US Constitution prescribes specific foreign policy powers to the executive and legislative branches. Broadly speaking, the Constitution gives the President the power to make foreign policy and gives Congress the power to limit what the executive can do beyond US borders. Throughout history, however, the division of powers between the two branches has not always been clear.² These shared and blurred lines of responsibility have provided opportunities for conflict as each branch tries to gain greater influence over foreign policy.³ However, this conflict can be an advantage since “it can provide checks and balance over ill-conceived and dangerous policies.”⁴ Often played out in a public forum, the debate over foreign policy often negatively impacts relationships with allies, sends mixed signals to adversaries, and diminishes American global standing.⁵ At the same time, however, a President may use this debate to gain an advantage over domestic and political adversaries.

¹ In the context of this thesis, foreign policy is defined as “the external goals for which a nation is prepared to commit its economic, information, and diplomatic resources,” borrowed from Cecil Van Meter Crabb and Pat M. Holt, *Invitation to Struggle : Congress, the President, and Foreign Policy*, 4th ed. (Washington, D.C.: CQ Press, 1992), 1-2.

² Crabb and Holt, *Invitation to Struggle : Congress, the President, and Foreign Policy*, 1. James M. McCormick, *American Foreign Policy & Process*, 3rd ed. (Itasca, Ill: F.E. Peacock Publishers, Inc., 1998), 277.

³ McCormick, *American Foreign Policy & Process*, 272.

⁴ Rebecca K. C. Hersman, *Friends and Foes : How Congress and the President Really Make Foreign Policy* (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution Press, 2000), 1.

⁵ Hersman, *Friends and Foes : How Congress and the President Really Make Foreign Policy*, 1.

Cecil Crabb and Pat Holt write that, ideally, the US foreign policy process includes six steps by which the executive and legislative branches formulate policy objectives and decide the most appropriate means for reaching them. First, officials and the public perceive an external challenge. Second, the President and his advisers identify the challenge and determine to what extent it affects US national security interests. Third, the President considers the available courses of action to respond to the challenge. Fourth, the government implements the policy. Fifth, Congress reviews policy implementation. Finally, the President and Congress determine the policy's future.⁶ In reality, however, the process is complex, non-linear, difficult, and often shaped by agencies with competing interests, which are external to the executive and legislative branches. This chapter examines the foreign policy process and briefly reviews the way in which the Bush administration developed and "sold" his Iraq policy in 2002.

The Role of the Executive

I think that, clearly, the Constitution leaves to the President, for good and sufficient reasons, the ultimate decision-making authority [in foreign policy.]

President Bill Clinton
October 1993

The President of the United States derives his foreign policy powers from two sources: The US Constitution and "from outgrowths of tradition, precedent, or historical necessity."⁷ Article II, Section I of the Constitution states, "The executive Power shall be vested in a President of the United States of America."⁸ This, according to James McCormick, grants the president "plenary power to be chief executive."⁹ Article II,

⁶ Crabb and Holt, *Invitation to Struggle : Congress, the President, and Foreign Policy*, 7-8.

⁷ ———, *Invitation to Struggle : Congress, the President, and Foreign Policy*, 11.

⁸ United States. and Robert A. Brady, *The Constitution of the United States of America as Amended : Unratified Amendments, Analytical Index* (Washington: U.S. G.P.O. : For sale by the Supt. of Docs. U.S. G.P.O., 2007), 6.

⁹ McCormick, *American Foreign Policy & Process*, 277.

Section I also states, “Before he enter on the Execution of his Office, he shall take the oath...to preserve, protect, and defend the Constitution of the United States.”¹⁰ McCormick writes that “plenary power” extends to foreign policy while Crabb and Holt state that the oath implies the responsibility to preserve US national security.

Article II, Section 2 states, “The President shall be Commander in Chief of the Army and Navy of the United States, and of the Militia of the several States, when called into the actual Service of the United States,” giving the president the most powerful foreign policy tools at his disposal.¹¹ Article II, Section 2 gives the President the power “by and with the Advice and Consent of the Senate, to make Treaties, provided two thirds of the Senators present concur.”¹² Article II, Section 3 empowers the President to “receive Ambassadors and other public Ministers.”¹³ This section of the Constitution is an important foreign policy tool granted to the President since Ambassador exchanges mean that the US recognizes a state’s legitimacy. The President can also withdraw or withhold recognition to coerce a non-compliant state to change its behavior.¹⁴ The President’s Constitutionally-mandated responsibilities as chief executive, chief diplomat, and commander in chief allows the executive branch to dominate foreign policy. “Historical precedents as Supreme Court decisions, and nondecisions” have only reinforced this dominance.¹⁵

¹⁰ United States. and Brady, *The Constitution of the United States of America as Amended : Unratified Amendments, Analytical Index*, 7.

¹¹ ———, *The Constitution of the United States of America as Amended : Unratified Amendments, Analytical Index*, 7. Crabb and Holt, *Invitation to Struggle : Congress, the President, and Foreign Policy*, 12.

¹² United States. and Brady, *The Constitution of the United States of America as Amended : Unratified Amendments, Analytical Index*, 7.

¹³ ———, *The Constitution of the United States of America as Amended : Unratified Amendments, Analytical Index*, 8.

¹⁴ Crabb and Holt, *Invitation to Struggle : Congress, the President, and Foreign Policy*, 18-19.

¹⁵ McCormick, *American Foreign Policy & Process*, 313. John Dumbrell, *The Making of Us Foreign Policy*, 2nd ed. (New York, NY: Manchester University Press, 1997), 59. Dumbrell specifically cites the 1936 *Curtiss-Wright* decision in which Justice George Sutherland set forth the modern theory of Presidential power in foreign affairs. In the decision, Justice Sutherland wrote of a “plenary and exclusive power of the presidency as sole organ of the federal government in

Crabb and Holt also cite other means by which the President extends his power to affect US foreign policy. The President may deny Congress access to information that may influence decision making in the legislative branch.¹⁶ The 1947 National Security Act, which helped create the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), gave the president a bureaucratic mechanism to gather intelligence as well as to perform other duties deemed critical to American national security.¹⁷ Another way the President affects foreign policy is through the budget message, which Congress uses as a guide to allocate funds “in all spheres of domestic and foreign governmental activity.”¹⁸ However, the legislative branch’s “power of the purse” is a potent weapon to oppose the President’s policies.

As the most visible symbol of American government, the President can also use the public forum to sway the public to support his policies. President Bush used every opportunity during the summer and fall of 2002 to present his case against Iraq, beginning with his speech to the United Nations (UN) on September 12.¹⁹ On October 7, 2002, he used another public speaking opportunity to try to convince the American people of the dangers Hussein posed to US national security. Tying Hussein to the al-Qaeda terrorists who attacked the US in 2001, he said, “Over the years, Iraq has provided safe haven to terrorists such as Abu Nidal ... We know that Iraq and the al Qaida [sic] terrorist network share a common enemy – the United States of America. We know that Iraq and Al Qaida have had high-level contacts that go back a decade. Some Al Qaida leaders who fled Afghanistan went to Iraq ... Iraq could decide on any given day to provide biological or chemical weapons to a terrorist

international relations.” Presidents since Truman have cited this decision to reinforce their power over US foreign policy.

¹⁶ Crabb and Holt, *Invitation to Struggle : Congress, the President, and Foreign Policy*, 21.

¹⁷ McCormick, *American Foreign Policy & Process*, 309.

¹⁸ Crabb and Holt, *Invitation to Struggle : Congress, the President, and Foreign Policy*, 21.

¹⁹ George W. Bush, "Address to the United Nations General Assembly in New York City, September 12, 2002," *Weekly Compilation of Presidential Documents* 38, no. 37 (September 16, 2002).

group or individual terrorists.”²⁰ Bush tried to gain the support of the American people only days before Congress was set to debate the resolution knowing that members of the legislative branch rarely oppose popular policies that have overwhelming public support.²¹ Other cabinet officials also used opportunities to present the administration’s case to the public.

As the leader of his political party, the President can often use his influence to garner support for his policies, especially among politicians seeking reelection to their posts. Party members are very aware that their chances for reelection depend on the President’s record with major issues.²² As illustrated later, the President used his influence and unprecedented popularity to limit opposition to his Iraq resolution.

The Role of the Legislative Branch

The Constitution gives the legislative branch direct and indirect means to influence a US President’s foreign affairs. Crabb and Holt assert that this gives the US Congress more power to influence foreign policy than any other national legislature in the world.²³

Congress’ most compelling Constitutional weapon for influencing foreign policy is the power to control the budget. Article 1, Section 8 and Section 9, states, “The Congress shall have the power to lay and collect taxes, duties, imposts and excises to pay the debts and provide for the common defense” and “No money shall be drawn from the Treasury, but in the consequence of Appropriations made by law.”²⁴ Since Congress approves all federal expenditures, it controls the funds required for a US President’s programs. Congress has the power to reject funding or fund a President’s policy under certain conditions, terminate programs and

²⁰ ———, “Address to the Nation on Iraq from Cincinnati, Ohio, October 7, 2002,” *Weekly Compilations of Presidential Documents* 38, no. 41 (October 14, 2002): 1717.

²¹ Crabb and Holt, *Invitation to Struggle : Congress, the President, and Foreign Policy*, 21-22.

²² ———, *Invitation to Struggle : Congress, the President, and Foreign Policy*, 21-22.

²³ ———, *Invitation to Struggle : Congress, the President, and Foreign Policy*, 2.

²⁴ United States. and Brady, *The Constitution of the United States of America as Amended : Unratified Amendments, Analytical Index*, 4, 6.

policies, investigate whether a given policy achieves desired objectives, and determine whether it is in the nation's interest to continue such a program.²⁵

Congress also has authority to check a President's power to make treaties by the constitutional mandate that two-thirds of the Senate must concur in order to ratify them.²⁶ Although the President retains the initiative during the entire treaty making process, this still provides the "upper chamber a distinctive and prestigious power in foreign affairs."²⁷ Although rare, Crabb and Holt cite the Senate's refusal to ratify membership in the League of Nations as an example of the Senate's Constitutionally mandated power to influence Presidential foreign policy initiatives. Through its confirmatory authority, the Constitution also gives the Senate authority to approve or reject a president's appointment to ambassadorships.²⁸

The Constitution additionally gives Congress a war-powers prerogative. Article I, Section 8 empowers Congress "to declare war," "to raise and support armies," and "to provide and maintain a Navy."²⁹ Thus, Congress has some control over a President's most prominent foreign policy tool.

Constitutional Ambiguity and the Means to Oppose Policies

McCormick highlights the three foreign policy powers that the President and Congress share: war making (Commander in Chief versus the power to declare war; to raise support armies; provide for common

²⁵ Crabb and Holt, *Invitation to Struggle : Congress, the President, and Foreign Policy*, 46.

²⁶ United States. and Brady, *The Constitution of the United States of America as Amended : Unratified Amendments, Analytical Index*, 7.

²⁷ Crabb and Holt, *Invitation to Struggle : Congress, the President, and Foreign Policy*, 14-15, 44. Crabb and Holt maintain that the reason the president retains the initiative is because he can withdraw the treaty from Senate consideration and even after the Senate ratifies a treaty, the president can refuse to "proclaim" the treaty into law if he feels it is detrimental to national security.

²⁸ United States. and Brady, *The Constitution of the United States of America as Amended : Unratified Amendments, Analytical Index*, 7-8.

²⁹ ———, *The Constitution of the United States of America as Amended : Unratified Amendments, Analytical Index*, 5.

defense), “commitment making” (treaty making versus ratification), and appointments (nominate and appoint ambassadors versus “by and with the advice and Consent of the Senate”).³⁰ These shared responsibilities actually blur lines of responsibility to ensure that no single entity has sole power to embroil the country in war.³¹ This ambiguity almost guarantees that Congress and the President will conflict over which branch has primacy in foreign affairs with each branch trying to wrest power from the other.

Throughout American history, control of foreign affairs has actually cycled between the two branches. After World War II, the President’s powers increased significantly. This was due to a growth in executive institutions as a result of the National Security Act of 1947, which enlarged and consolidated a President’s “foreign policy machinery” and provided the President additional methods to affect foreign policy.³² However, McCormick writes that the Vietnam War, the increase in foreign policy powers of the president, and the Watergate affair “all contributed to efforts by the legislative branch to reassert its foreign policy prerogatives” at the beginning of the 1970s.³³ What follows is a discussion of Congressional actions to exert its power over foreign policy. A brief review of these efforts help to illustrate the ways in which it presents ways Congress can oppose the President over his foreign policy initiatives.

The 1972 Case-Zablocki Act and the 1979 Foreign Relations Authorization Act required that all “foreign arrangements” made by any executive branch agency be reported to the State Department within twenty days “for ultimate transmittal to Congress.” According to McCormick, this was Congress’ attempt to rein in the President and

³⁰ McCormick, *American Foreign Policy & Process*, 279.

³¹ Dumbrell, *The Making of Us Foreign Policy*, 55.

³² McCormick, *American Foreign Policy & Process*, 308.

³³ ———, *American Foreign Policy & Process*, 322.

signaled “congressional determination to participate in the arrangement-making process.”³⁴

The Vietnam War influenced another directive that limits the President’s foreign affairs powers, especially his ability to use military force. The 1973 War Powers Resolution requires the President to consult Congress before committing military forces, limits the time of deployment of such forces, and provides Congress the ability to recall forces prior to the time limit. The resolution specified conditions under which the President can commit military forces abroad: a declaration of war, specific statutory authorization, and a national emergency created by an attack on the US.³⁵ The resolution also mandates that the President consult Congress “in every possible instance” before committing troops and provide regular reports until the troops redeploy. If the President commits the military without a declaration of war, he must report to Congress within forty-eight hours explaining the reasons for deploying troops. The resolution also limits the duration of military deployments to sixty days—ninety under special circumstances—and empowers Congress to terminate military involvement before the sixty-day time limit.³⁶ The War Powers Act, in short, represented an effort by Congress to prevent “future Vietnams” as it “gives Congress a procedure” to second-guess the President when sending troops into hostile action.³⁷

As previously discussed, Congressional budgetary powers allow the legislative branch to limit US foreign affairs involvement and in some instances to shape foreign policies. McCormick wrote that in the 1970s and 1980s Congress invoked the “power of the purse” for several reasons. The first reason was “to reduce American military involvement

³⁴ ———, *American Foreign Policy & Process*, 323-325.

³⁵ ———, *American Foreign Policy & Process*, 327.

³⁶ Pat M. Holt, United States., and American Enterprise Institute for Public Policy Research., *The War Powers Resolution : The Role of Congress in U.S. Armed Intervention* (Washington: American Enterprise Institute for Public Policy Research, 1978), 1-3, 39-40.

³⁷ Holt, United States., and American Enterprise Institute for Public Policy Research., *The War Powers Resolution : The Role of Congress in U.S. Armed Intervention*, 37. McCormick, *American Foreign Policy & Process*, 328.

abroad.”³⁸ Second, Congress wanted “to cut off covert actions in the Third World.”³⁹ The third reason was “to allow congressional review of the sale of weapons and the transference of nuclear fuels to other countries.”⁴⁰ The fourth reason Congress invoked this power was to allow Congress “to specify the trading relations with other nations.”⁴¹ Finally, Congress wanted “to limit the transfer of American economic and military assistance to countries with gross violations of human rights, among other things.”⁴² Such authority, according to Senator Robert Byrd, “is the greatest power in our Constitutional system.”⁴³

Increased oversight through committees is another means by which Congress can impose its will on foreign policy. Since the 1970s, reporting requirements to Congress have increased. These reports allow Congress to oversee implementation of a President’s specific foreign policy. The first of three specific reports is the periodic or recurrent report, which directs the executive branch to submit specific information about a foreign policy to Congress every year, every six months, or sometimes even quarterly. The notification report informs Congress when the executive contemplates a policy or one has been undertaken. The bulk of these types of reports are notifications about arms sales, arms control measures, and foreign aid. The third type of report, a one-time report, is rare but used by Congress to help them understand a policy in question.⁴⁴

The Senate Foreign Relations Committee monitors a President’s foreign policy and plays a key role by advising the Senate on treaties and presidential nominations for diplomatic posts. However, the committee’s influence on foreign policy is often determined by the leadership and

³⁸ McCormick, *American Foreign Policy & Process*, 341.

³⁹ ———, *American Foreign Policy & Process*, 341.

⁴⁰ ———, *American Foreign Policy & Process*, 341.

⁴¹ ———, *American Foreign Policy & Process*, 341.

⁴² ———, *American Foreign Policy & Process*, 341.

⁴³ ———, *American Foreign Policy & Process*, 341.

⁴⁴ ———, *American Foreign Policy & Process*, 347-348.

initiative of the committee chairman. Senator Joseph Biden was the Chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee from 2001-2003. In late July 2002, Biden used the committee to question cabinet officials over the administration's Iraq policy. Sensing that the administration was undergoing preparations for an invasion of Iraq, he used the opportunity to reveal the President's plans for removing Hussein from power and neutralizing his stockpiles of weapons of mass destruction.⁴⁵ Soon after, the House Armed Services Committee also called a meeting to discuss the administration's Iraq policy. The committee called on experts in an attempt to establish the true nature of the threat Hussein posed to the US.⁴⁶

Both committees questioned key cabinet officials, which helped the administration to improve the policy and gain support from members of Congress. The committees' attempt to influence Bush's Iraq policy also had unintended consequences for the Democrats. The hearings accelerated the Iraq debate, which distracted the American people from economic problems, an issue with which the Democrats had enjoyed success in the polls throughout the summer.⁴⁷

Largely due to the Vietnam War, the House International Relations Committee has played a larger role in the formulation and review of American foreign policy since the 1970s. The House and Senate Armed Services Committees have also played a more active role in shaping defense policy. These committees and oversight initiatives, a result of the Vietnam policies, helped to increase congressional power to check the President's foreign policy assertiveness. Congress makes its presence felt

⁴⁵ Joseph Biden, and Richard Lugar, "Debating Iraq," *New York Times Online*, July 31, 2002 <http://www.nytimes.com/2002/07/31/opinion/debating-iraq.html?scp=2&sq=Biden%2C+Iraq&st=nyt> (accessed 21 April 2010). James Dao, "Senate Panel to Ask Bush Aides to Give Details on His Iraq Policy," *New York Times Online*, July 10, 2002. <http://www.nytimes.com/2002/07/10/world/senate-panel-to-ask-bush-aides-to-give-details-on-his-iraq-policy.html?scp=1&sq=Biden%2C+Iraq&st=nyt> (accessed 20 April 2002).

⁴⁶ United States Congress, *United States Policy toward Iraq: Hearing before the United States Congress House of Representatives Committee on Armed Services*, 107th Cong., 2nd Sess. (2003).

⁴⁷ As cited in Polling Report.com, "Economic Outlook," <http://www.pollingreport.com/consumer.htm> (accessed 5 May 2010).

through legislation, hearings in standing committees about foreign policy, and individual actions by “issue leaders” who convey their foreign policy views through newsletters and by using the House and Senate floors as soapboxes for their views.⁴⁸ Individual congressional power and strong issue leaders, according to Hersman, enhanced Congress’ powers over foreign policy, forcing the President to go on a sustained campaign over foreign policy initiatives he finds important to his agenda.⁴⁹ These techniques play a role in how Congress resists the President as he tries to implement a specific foreign policy for other countries.

How did the post-9/11 Bush Iraq Policy Take Shape?

Iraq and Saddam Hussein were at the center of American foreign policy during the George H. W. Bush and Bill Clinton administrations. Under the first President Bush, US and coalition military forces compelled Saddam Hussein to surrender the territory Iraqi forces gained when they invaded Kuwait in 1990. President Bush stopped short of overthrowing Saddam Hussein and relied on United Nations Security Council resolutions and American aircraft to keep him in check. President Clinton inherited the Iraqi issue from the Bush administration. For the most part, the administration was content to keep Saddam Hussein “boxed in” with sanctions and occasional military force.

The Iraqi issue never went away but receded into the background when President George W. Bush assumed the Presidency in January 2001. The Iraq issue “seldom came up in speeches and debates” during the 2000 Presidential campaign.⁵⁰ The administration had no real plans for Iraq and they had other issues they deemed more important at the time. In the weeks prior to the September 11, 2001 attacks, one of

⁴⁸ McCormick, *American Foreign Policy & Process*, 346-358.

⁴⁹ Hersman, *Friends and Foes : How Congress and the President Really Make Foreign Policy*, 106-107.

⁵⁰ Steven Metz, *Iraq and the Evolution of American Strategy*, 1st ed. (Washington, D.C.: Potomac Books, 2008), 73.

President Bush's most pressing concerns was the economy and a growing unemployment rate.⁵¹ The September 11 attacks on the World Trade Center changed the administration's priorities and once again placed Iraq at the center of American foreign policy debates. While the administration initially deferred dealing with Hussein and Iraq until a later time, conservatives outside the administration, and some from previous administrations, promoted a war against Hussein using September 11 to plead their case.⁵² Articles linking Iraq to the attacks surfaced before year's end.⁵³ However, the Bush administration's biggest concern with Iraq immediately after September 11 was its compliance with United Nations sanctions prohibiting Iraq from developing and possessing weapons of mass destruction.⁵⁴

The administration only began to develop its future strategy after the campaign in Afghanistan wound down. Within the US, most policymakers and lawmakers agreed that Saddam Hussein posed a threat to Americans and the rest of the world. Within the Bush administration and virtually every other Western government, it was a given that Hussein possessed weapons of mass destruction and would provide these weapons to terrorists.⁵⁵ The putative US policy in Iraq since the end of the first Gulf War was regime change.⁵⁶ The Clinton administration continued the policy but left it to the next administration to determine how best to accomplish it.⁵⁷ This was the subject of the debate that ensued in the Bush administration in summer 2002.

⁵¹ James and John F. Dickerson Carney, "Is This Your Father's Recession," *Time* 158, no. 11 (September 10, 2001): 26-30.

⁵² Metz, *Iraq and the Evolution of American Strategy*, 102-103.

⁵³ Michael Isikoff, with Warren Getler, "Hard Questions About an Iraqi Connection," *Newsweek* 138, no. 18 (October 2001): 6.

⁵⁴ George W. Bush, "The President's News Conference, October 11, 2001," *Weekly Compilation of Presidential Documents* 37, no. 41 (October 15, 2001): 1457.

⁵⁵ Metz, *Iraq and the Evolution of American Strategy*, 106-107.

⁵⁶ ———, *Iraq and the Evolution of American Strategy*, 69.

⁵⁷ ———, *Iraq and the Evolution of American Strategy*, 71. Dao, "Senate Panel to Ask Bush Aides to Give Details on His Iraq Policy."

Initial planning for military action against Iraq began in November 2001 when Secretary of Defense Rumsfeld ordered United States Central Command (USCENTCOM) to review existing Operational Plans for Iraq.⁵⁸ USCENTCOM planning continued all the way up to the invasion in March 2003, with multiple changes initiated by both Rumsfeld and Bush.⁵⁹

After President Bush spoke to the graduating class of the US Military Academy in June 2002, policymakers, military planners, and key US allies were convinced that the President had already made up his mind about military action to overthrow Saddam in Iraq.⁶⁰ However, it is difficult to identify exactly when the Bush administration decided to invade Iraq. George Tenet, the Director of Central Intelligence, US Central Intelligence Agency, wrote, “One of the great mysteries to me is exactly when the war in Iraq became inevitable.”⁶¹ However, by late spring and early summer 2002, interagency and senior administration officials increasingly focused their attention on Iraq. Richard Haas, Director of the State Department’s Policy and Planning staff in 2002, said “My sense that something was up was reinforced by those who worked with me ... [when they] began to come back from meetings around the government and report[ed] that those of their counterparts known for advocating going to war with Iraq appeared too cocky for comfort.”⁶²

As Commander in Chief of the US military, it is within the President’s constitutional mandate to order the military to plan for and execute war plans. The Bush administration took this mandate to heart as most of the preparation and planning for the war remained internal to key players in the President’s cabinet: Vice President Dick Cheney,

⁵⁸ Gen. Tommy Franks as cited in Metz, *Iraq and the Evolution of American Strategy*, 109. Bob Woodward, *Plan of Attack* (New York, N.Y.: Simon & Schuster, 2004), 7-8.

⁵⁹ Metz, *Iraq and the Evolution of American Strategy*, 111.

⁶⁰ ———, *Iraq and the Evolution of American Strategy*, 112-113. Richard N. Haass, *War of Necessity, War of Choice: A Memoir of Two Iraq Wars* (New York, NY: Simon and Schuster, 2009), 213.

⁶¹ As cited in Metz, *Iraq and the Evolution of American Strategy*, 105.

⁶² Haass, *War of Necessity, War of Choice: A Memoir of Two Iraq Wars*, 213.

Condoleezza Rice, Secretary of State Colin Power, Paul Wolfowitz, and Donald Rumsfeld. Rumors abounded throughout 2002 about the President's decision to go to war. Congress exercised its constitutional mandate to keep the President in check late summer 2002 through a series of committee hearings. It was then that the debate accelerated and the policy took its final form. By September 2002, the administration's policy on Iraq was clear. The President submitted a resolution to Congress in late September authorizing him to use force against Iraq. Both Houses of Congress debated the resolution for two days in October. Using its constitutional powers, Congress changed the original document through a series of amendments presented by its various members. However, the intent of the final document was clear. The Senate and House voted and passed the resolution on October 10, and the President signed it into law a few days later.

Chapter 2

Four Theoretical Perspectives

*As had been the case since the beginning of the
republic, our foreign policy works best when the
president and Congress speak with one voice.*

The Honorable Lee H. Hamilton

Conventional wisdom states that a leader's reputation with his domestic audience affects his foreign policy decisions, especially the decisions that result in a military conflict abroad. For example, Thucydides criticized Alcibiades' selfish motivations to lead a military expedition to Sicily, which he believed was an attempt to regain stature and wealth while diverting attention from his domestic problems.¹ Conventional wisdom also states that a leader's unpopularity, as demonstrated by vocal opposition from the public and Congress to his policies, indicates the government's weakness, which in turn leaves the state vulnerable to challenges by rival states. President George W. Bush's criticism of Democratic Congressional detractors of his Iraq policy in January 2006 demonstrated his belief that the Iraqis were watching the ongoing debate in the United States. Such debates gave the impression that the American people and Congress lacked the resolve to continue the war in Iraq.²

This chapter reviews four theories that analyze the effects of domestic issues on military conflict. First, I examine Diversionary and Strategic Conflict Avoidance theories as explanations of how state domestic conditions lead to conflict or conflict avoidance between adversaries in the international arena. Although these behaviors are common among most democratic states, I examine the theories from the

¹ Thucydides, Robert B. Strassler, and Richard Crawley, *The Landmark Thucydides : A Comprehensive Guide to the Peloponnesian War*, 1st Touchstone ed. (New York, N.Y.: Simon & Schuster, 1998), Book VI.

² President George W. Bush as cited by Foster, "'Comfort to Our Adversaries'? Partisan Ideology, Domestic Vulnerability, and Strategic Targeting," 433.

American perspective. The next section then examines the Coercive Democracy theory, which postulates that support from opposition parties signals a President's resolve at following through with his policies. Finally, the "Invitation to Struggle" theory, which is an outgrowth of both Diversionary and Strategic Conflict Avoidance theory and derived in part from Kenneth Schultz's ideas on coercive diplomacy. The theory presumes that legislative opposition to an American president's military policies demonstrates state disunity and lack of resolve, leaving the country vulnerable to challenges from adversary states.

The Diversionary Theory of War

The diversionary theory of war developed from sociological analyses of the interactions between rival social groups. Literature from sociology reveals that group members tend to "become more cohesive and supportive of their leader" when they are faced with an outside threat.³ Political scientists have since developed the concept to examine the relationship between domestic turmoil and interstate conflict. The key point to the diversionary theory of war is that leaders use foreign policy to "manipulate domestic support."⁴

A critical assumption of the theory, regardless of the state's government structure, is that leaders want to remain in power. Their political futures hinge upon their popularity with their constituencies, which in turn is contingent upon the success of their domestic and international policies.⁵ Domestic problems demonstrate a leader's failures, thus decreasing constituent support. Proponents of diversionary theory, such as Charles Ostrom and Brian Job, state that leaders use military conflict to divert attention away from the domestic problems in an effort to increase their popularity. The lower the level of

³ Sara McLaughlin Mitchell, and Brandon C. Prins, "Rivalry and Diversionary Uses of Force," *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 48, no. 6 (December 2004): 939.

⁴ Miller, "Domestic Structures and the Diversionary Use of Force," 766.

⁵ ———, "Domestic Structures and the Diversionary Use of Force," 763.

support, the more likely a leader will be to engage in international conflict to increase popularity.⁶

Empirical data show that state leaders increase their popularity and support during militarized disputes with adversary states, thus demonstrating why a leader may want to divert attention towards an outside threat. In the United States, for example, a President's popularity increased 4 to 5 percent when he exhibited "conflictual behavior" towards the Soviet Union.⁷ Mitchell and Prins call this increased support the "rally effect".⁸ According to the diversionary theory, the rally effect encourages leaders who face domestic problems to undergo military adventures abroad in order to "foster internal unity" and "obscure problems" at home.⁹ Critics of the Clinton Administration, for example, contend that Operation DESERT FOX was the President's attempt to distract attention away from his alleged scandals in the United States.¹⁰

Ostrom and Job were one of the first to write about diversionary theory, focusing on the President's use of the military short of extended military commitments. Called the "political use of force", these are acts directed by the president that "fall somewhere between acts of diplomacy and intentional uses of military power such as in Korea and Vietnam."¹¹

Ostrom and Job posit that the President constantly monitors the international, domestic, and political environments and bases his decision to use military force on these three variables. They divide each variable into several sub-components and hypothesize the probability of

⁶ ———, "Domestic Structures and the Diversionary Use of Force," 766.

⁷ Russett, "Economic Decline, Electoral Pressure, and the Initiation of Interstate Conflict," 124.

⁸ Mitchell, "Rivalry and Diversionary Uses of Force," 939.

⁹ Foster, "An 'Invitation to Struggle'? The Use of Force Against 'Legislatively Vulnerable' American Presidents," 423-424. Mitchell, "Rivalry and Diversionary Uses of Force," 938-939.

¹⁰ Francis X. Clines, and Steven Lee Myers, "Attack on Iraq: The Overview; Impeachment Vote in House Delayed as Clinton Launches Iraq Air Strike, Citing Military Need to Move Swiftly," *New York Times Online* (17 December 1998), <http://www.nytimes.com/1998/12/17/world/attack-iraq-overview-impeachment-vote-house-delayed-clinton-launches-iraq-air.html?scp=8&sq=Clinton,%20Operation%20DESERT%20FOX&st=cse> (accessed 25 February 2010).

¹¹ Ostrom, "The President and the Political Use of Force," 541-542.

a President's use of force for each. In the international arena, they surmised that higher levels of tension between superpowers increase a president's predisposition to use force while greater American strategic dominance and depth of involvement in a shooting war decrease it. Regarding domestic factors, they speculate that greater public concern about international tension and periods following US involvement in war reduce the propensity to use force. Public awareness of American strategic dominance, as well as a worsening domestic economy, increases the president's propensity to use force. Finally, high presidential approval ratings reduce the propensity to use force while declining ratings and election campaigns increase the tendency to use force. While their model incorporates the three variables and their sub-factors to determine how well they accounted for Presidents' uses of force from 1948 to 1976, they limited the model to only those occasions when the President decided to use "major force components or nuclear capable" forces.¹²

Ostrom and Job's model demonstrates that all three factors—international, domestic, and political—affect the President's use of force. Their results diverge from the traditional *realist* viewpoint in that they stress the diminished role international factors play in the President's decisions, noting that domestic political factors and economic decline play a more significant role in the propensity to use force.¹³ Looking specifically at the economy, Ostrom and Job posit that the President has at his disposal two possible responses to economic decline: He might focus on domestic policies that improve the economy, or he could divert attention from the economic problems through military force abroad. Because economic conditions shape the public's opinion and directly influence the President's chances for future electoral success, they have

¹² ———, "The President and the Political Use of Force," 543, 549-550, 552.

¹³ ———, "The President and the Political Use of Force," 557, 559.

often led our chief executives to initiate diversionary conflicts to engender the rally effect.¹⁴

Brulé adds a different twist to the discussion by contending that Congress may limit the President's options to deal with economic decline. The President may have several options to address economic problems. However, if Congress opposes the means by which a President can deal with economic decline, this limits his options to deal with the issue, forcing him to consider other options in order to display his competence to the electorate. Thus, for Brulé, Congress may in fact force the President to initiate a military adventure to demonstrate his ability to lead the country.¹⁵

While many political scientists do not dispute the importance of domestic factors in a President's decision to use force, they are wary of the link between the President's diversionary use of force and the economy, citing a lack of adequate data to prove the link between them.¹⁶ Others, however, believe such a link exists between a lagging economy and a leader's propensity to initiate diversionary conflicts. Hess and Orphanides, for example, develop a model providing evidence to support Ostrom's and Job's assertions. They link the political use of "discretionary war" to economic performance and the election cycle in the United States. Classifying wars into two broad categories, avoidable and unavoidable, Hess and Orphanides assert that presidents may choose to avoid war during international crises. They also acknowledge that some wars may be unavoidable. Their model assumes that voters prefer presidents "with proven wartime abilities" and economic competency. If a president takes office during peacetime and has not had the opportunity to demonstrate his wartime abilities, then voters only have

¹⁴ ———, "The President and the Political Use of Force," 553.

¹⁵ David Brulé, "Congressional Opposition, the Economy, and U.S. Disruptive Initiation, 1946-2000," *The Journal of Conflict Resolution* 50, no. 4 (August 2006): 361-365.

¹⁶ Patrick James, and John R. O Neal, "The Influence of Domestic and International Politics on the President's Use of Force," *The Journal of Conflict Resolution* 35, no. 2 (June 1991): 314.

economic conditions to gauge his skills. Hess and Orphanides write, “The *discretionary* [sic] power to wage war gives the incumbent leader the option of forcing the learning of his war-handling ability.”¹⁷ Thus, a president who demonstrates poor domestic economic acumen can exercise his discretion to use war in order to improve his reelection prospects. “A war changes the likely outcome of the election from a sure loss to a potential victory.”¹⁸

Hess and Orphanides accumulate economic data and examine election cycles from 1897 through 1989. Their results show that their model supports their hypothesis. During periods in which the president is up for reelection and the economy is doing poorly, conflict initiation and escalation exceeds 60 percent. On the other hand, the probability is only 30 percent in years during which either the economy is healthy or a President is not campaigning for reelection. More importantly, they assert that over half of the conflicts initiated by presidents seeking reelection were avoidable.¹⁹ Thus, their study supports Ostrom and Job’s assertions linking the diversionary use of force with poor economic conditions.

Russett expands on Ostrom’s and Job’s ideas, specifically the link between a leader’s use of force and the state of the domestic economy. Unlike Ostrom and Job, his study was not limited to the United States. Instead, he explored differences between all democratic and nondemocratic states. Russett notes that democratic states are more likely to engage in militarized disputes involving the threat or the use of force during declines in the state’s gross domestic product. He also compares major democratic powers, such as the United States, to minor ones and determines that major democratic powers are especially prone to international disputes following periods of economic decline. Looking

¹⁷ Gregory D. Hess, and Athanasios Orphanides, “War Politics: An Economic, Rational-Voter Framework,” *The American Economy Review* 85, no. 4 (September 1995): 828-829.

¹⁸ Hess, “War Politics: An Economic, Rational-Voter Framework,” 841.

¹⁹ ———, “War Politics: An Economic, Rational-Voter Framework,” 829-839, 841-842.

specifically at the United States, Russett examines the impact of elections on the use of force by an American President, observing an increased use of military force when economic distress precedes major elections. Although it was evident prior to Congressional elections, the use of force was most common prior to presidential elections. During elections following periods of good economic growth in the US, Russett observes fewer instances of militarized disputes initiated by an incumbent President.

Russett explains the phenomenon by tying it to the pressure to remain in power. This compels Presidents to divert attention from domestic troubles and capitalize on the ensuing rally effect long enough to get re-elected.²⁰ DeRouen's study supports this conclusion as well, although he contradicts the notion that elections compel Presidents to derive the rally effect by initiating war abroad. DeRouen also argues that "high public concern" over a specific domestic issue makes it more difficult for Presidents to divert attention by using force. For example, if the electorate believes that the economy is the greatest threat and problem the nation faces, then a diversionary conflict will likely not accomplish its objective. This limits how much influence economic conditions, or any other issue the electorate may deem important, may have on the decision to wage war.²¹

Benjamin Fordham examines specific domestic conditions that may lead American Presidents to use force when it is "most convenient for them to employ it."²² Analyzing data from 1949 through 1994, Fordham examines not only the opportunities to use force, but also the

²⁰ Russett, "Economic Decline, Electoral Pressure, and the Initiation of Interstate Conflict," 125, 130-134, Sara McLaughlin Mitchell, and Will H. Moore, "Presidential Use of Force During the Cold War: Aggregation, Truncation, and Temporal Dynamics," *American Journal of Political Science* 46, no. 2 (April 2002).

²¹ Jr. DeRouen, Karl, "Presidents and the Diversionary Use of Force: A Research Note," *International Studies Quarterly* 44, no. 2 (June 2000): 325-326.

²² Benjamin O. Fordham, "The Politics of Threat Perception and the Use of Force: A Political Economy Model of U.S. Uses of Force, 1949-1994," *International Studies Quarterly* 42, no. 3 (September 1998): 567.

costs and benefits of such policies. Through the results of his model, he concludes that the “economic and political conditions that make military force both less costly and more useful are most likely to be associated with the frequent use” of the military over time. These conditions include high unemployment rates, strong investor confidence, the absence of ongoing war, and presidential re-election campaigns.²³

Miller argues that most diversionary theorists fail to account for two factors that affect a leader’s willingness to use international conflicts to manipulate his popularity: policy resources available to a leader to deal with domestic problems, and the state’s political structure. Controlling for these two factors, his model supports the conclusions of previous studies: the less popular the leader, the more likely he is to use force. In addition, the level of resources available to deal with problems allows leaders to target those policies and problems that may result in their unpopularity with the public. However, if those resources are not available, then the leader will most likely pursue international conflict in order to garner the rally effect to improve his standing with the population.²⁴ This is especially prevalent during periods when the President is unpopular with Congress, including periods of economic decline. An uncooperative Congress removes some of the policy options available to the President to deal with problems of economic decline, forcing him “to look beyond the domestic arena for opportunities to demonstrate his competence.”²⁵ Finally, Miller adds that autocratic leaders are more likely to abuse their power for personal gain, leading them to undergo military adventures to improve their standing in their state.²⁶

²³ Fordham, "The Politics of Threat Perception and the Use of Force: A Political Economy Model of U.S. Uses of Force, 1949-1994," 584-585.

²⁴ Miller, "Domestic Structures and the Diversionary Use of Force," 763, 766, 779-780.

²⁵ Brule, "Congressional Opposition, the Economy, and U.S. Disruptive Initiation, 1946-2000," 469-470.

²⁶ Miller, "Domestic Structures and the Diversionary Use of Force," 763, 766, 779-780.

Christopher Gelpi approaches the two factors from a different point of view and presents a different conclusion. Instead of examining the root of the problem, i.e. economic decline, he analyzes the public's response to such problems, which is often some form of demonstration or protest. Gelpi writes that state leaders have three options to deal with unrest resulting from domestic issues: (1) succumb to the demands of dissatisfied groups and deal with the problem in question, (2) repress these groups, or (3) divert attention from the problem through the external use of force. Gelpi writes that neither democratic nor autocratic regimes will succumb to the public's demands. Thus, leaders only have the last two options to handle domestic political unrest.

Democratic leaders, like the American President, are "burdened" with several realities that shape their response to the unrest. First, their political future lies with the support of the people. In the United States, this restricts the President from suppressing unrest, which is an unpopular move in an open society. Second, a democratic leader will often share power with other branches of government. These branches may restrict the President from using force against his own people. Such restrictions do not hinder an autocratic regime, and since demonstrations against the regime's policies threaten an autocratic leader's political future, he has incentives to suppress such opposition.

Gelpi's study of international crises between 1948 and 1982 supports his hypotheses. Democratic states are more likely to initiate diversionary conflicts while autocratic leaders tend to use their military to suppress domestic opposition to the regime.²⁷ The study supports the diversionary theory by linking domestic opposition to the President's use of force abroad.

²⁷ Christopher Gelpi, "Democratic Diversions: Governmental Structure and the Externalization of Domestic Conflict," *The Journal of Conflict Resolution* 41, no. 2 (April 1997): 256, 258-261, 277-280.

Others discount Ostrom's and Jobs' assertions. Meernik, for example, challenges their argument, stating that the two authors bind their study to only general international and domestic conditions. He contends that in order to predict when a president is likely to use force, one must analyze conditions where the opportunity to do so may arise. Writing during the Cold War, he stated that there are five general categories when a President has the opportunity to use force. These include direct military threat to the United States and its allies; direct action against the American military, citizens, property, and economic interests; Soviet attempts to advance their interests; Latin American insurgencies; and conflict between nations that may have "disruptive effects" on United States national interests. Faced with these opportunities, a President weighs his options based on three factors: "1) the protection of American security interests abroad, 2) the maintenance of his domestic reputation for taking forceful action, and 3) the avoidance of confrontation with the Soviet Union."²⁸ Finally, Meernik identifies nine additional conditions the president weighs to make the decision to use force.²⁹ Using all these factors in a model, Meernik discovers that contrary to Ostrom and Job's assertions, "domestic political conditions appear to exercise little influence on Presidents' decisions to use military force. In fact, he finds that international factors play a greater role than Ostrom and Job surmise."³⁰

The relationship between leader popularity and diversionary use of force may be restricted to major powers.³¹ In addition, diversionary behavior is limited to interstate behavior and is most common between enduring rivals, states whose characteristic historical interactions often

²⁸ James Meernik, "Presidential Decision Making and the Political Use of Military Force," *International Studies Quarterly* 38, no. 1 (March 1994): 123, 125, 128-134.

²⁹ Meernik's nine factors: established military presence, presence/absence of United States military aid, prior use of force in a region, threats to American citizens, presidential popularity, election cycles, economic distress, preventing escalation of a limited war, and Soviet use of force.

³⁰ Meernik, "Presidential Decision Making and the Political Use of Military Force," 128-134.

³¹ Miller, "Domestic Structures and the Diversionary Use of Force," 762.

lead to military conflict over stakes critical to their long-term security interests.³² In such relationships, states believe the rival threat is “immediate, serious, and may involve military force.” This explains the reason why disputes between rivals often result in the use of force. Historical enmity between states makes the use of force more acceptable against rivals.³³ Thus, enduring rivalries present an ideal condition for the use of military force. According to Fordham, some traditional American rivals include the former Soviet Union, Vietnam, Iran, Libya, and North Korea.³⁴ Ostrom and Job suggest that during the Cold War, American Presidents were more likely to consider military options when tensions rose with the Soviet Union, the state considered America’s greatest rival.³⁵

There are many diversionary theory critics, who generally based their arguments on contradicting the effect of such conflicts on a President’s popularity. Critics of diversionary behavior assert that the rally effect expected with the use of force is “neither certain nor strong.” Brody and Shapiro find that 20 percent of the 45 situations expected to produce the rally effect actually led to a decline in a President’s popularity.³⁶ Lian and Oneal, in studying 102 events from 1950 through 1984, discovered that the mean change in a president’s approval rating after using force was zero percent. They acknowledge that the president received a boost in approval rating during crises and conflicts that received significant media, but the actual gain in popularity is on average less than 3 percent, which is inconsequential when faced with the

³² Fordham, "Strategic Conflict Avoidance and the Diversionary Use of Force," 135. Mitchell, "Rivalry and Diversionary Uses of Force," 937, 943.

³³ Mitchell, "Rivalry and Diversionary Uses of Force," 943.

³⁴ Fordham, "Strategic Conflict Avoidance and the Diversionary Use of Force," 136.

³⁵ James, "The Influence of Domestic and International Politics on the President's Use of Force," 312.

³⁶ ———, "The Influence of Domestic and International Politics on the President's Use of Force," 328.

possibility that a conflict might result in a protracted war.³⁷ The inconsequential gains associated with the rally effect support DeRouen's conclusion that approval ratings do not drive an increase in a President's use of force.³⁸ Finally, Meernik and Waterman believe that the diversionary use of force by American Presidents is a myth. While they do not deny a relationship between domestic political conditions and US military policy, they argue that the evidence to support the diversionary behavior is weak. Rather, they contend that a president uses force out of concern for national security, hegemonic responsibilities, and "the peculiarities of the crisis he is facing."³⁹

Others argue that domestic political conditions do not drive Presidents to initiate conflict. Rather, foreign leaders believe such poor domestic political conditions create openings for the President to initiate conflict, thus compelling them to avoid conflict with the United States. This is the basis of Strategic Conflict Avoidance theory.

A spin-off from the diversionary theory of war, strategic conflict avoidance proponents argue that rivals understand the conditions under which a leader may have incentives to divert attention from internal problems. As such, adversaries avoid initiating conflict with a state like the United States because doing so invokes the rally effect and increases the President's "resolve to see the conflict through."⁴⁰

Alastair Smith first introduced the idea in a 1996 article titled "Diversionary Foreign Policy in Democratic Systems." Smith writes that leaders not only respond to the domestic pressures in their own countries but also to the pressures experienced by leaders in other countries. "Therefore, the leader in one country considers the domestic

³⁷ Bradley Lian, and John R. Oneal, "Presidents, the Use of Military Force, and Public Opinion," *The Journal of Conflict Resolution* 37, no. 2 (June 1993): 294.

³⁸ DeRouen, "Presidents and the Diversionary Use of Force: A Research Note," 326.

³⁹ James Meernik, and Peter Waterman, "The Myth of the Diversionary Use of Force by American Presidents," *Political Research Quarterly* 49, no. 3 (September 1996): 587.

⁴⁰ Foster, "An 'Invitation to Struggle'? The Use of Force Against 'Legislatively Vulnerable' American Presidents," 424.

situation in another before deciding whether or not to start a [military] crisis.”⁴¹ In the American situation, the transparency that characterizes the American system makes it easy for states to determine whether the President has incentives to divert. David Clark cites the US economic condition as a key “red flag” rivals use to ascertain the President’s standing with the American electorate.⁴² Poor economic conditions usually lead to a president’s unpopularity. Diversionary theory states that failing economies and poor support from the electorate provide convenient rationales to initiate an international crisis. However, empirical evidence suggests that adversary states actually avoid initiating military conflict with the United States during these periods, lending credence to the strategic conflict avoidance perspective.⁴³ Therefore, Smith’s study suggests that these factors actually reduce opportunities for a president to divert because the adversary avoids confrontation during these periods.⁴⁴ Other studies support Smith’s ideas.

Leeds and Davis, for example, find a link between domestic politics and the likelihood of states becoming the targets of conflict for other states. Their study of 18 advanced industrial democracies from 1952 to 1988 show that other states make fewer demands when the sample states are “performing poorly.” On the other hand, “high economic growth” increases the likelihood that other states “will make forceful demands.” They find that other states targeted advanced industrial democracies most often during periods of high economic growth, times when a democratic leader feels secure about job approval and is less likely to take the opportunity to divert attention away from domestic

⁴¹ Smith, "Diversionary Foreign Policy in Democratic Systems," 149.

⁴² David H. Clark, "Can Strategic Interaction Divert Diversionary Behavior? A Model of U.S. Conflict Propensity," *The Journal of Politics* 65, no. 4 (November 2003): 1020-1021.

⁴³ Dennis M. Foster, and Glenn Palmer, "Presidents, Public Opinion, and Diversionary Behavior: The Role of Partisan Support Reconsidered," *Foreign Policy Analysis* 2 (2006): 284.

⁴⁴ Clark, "Can Strategic Interaction Divert Diversionary Behavior? A Model of U.S. Conflict Propensity," 1016.

issues.⁴⁵ Thus, they contradict the notion that domestic political vulnerability promotes aggression. Their study indicates that such a vulnerability “enhances deterrence,” removing opportunities for the leader to divert attention from domestic problems.⁴⁶

Diversionary Theory examines the role of domestic politics and problems in international conflicts. Strategic Conflict Avoidance, on the other hand, analyzes how the same domestic issues may prevent international conflict. Schultz’s analysis of coercive democracy and Foster’s “Invitation to Struggle” model examine the endogenous and exogenous causes of international disputes and conflict between states. Schultz argues that competition between opposing parties in democratic states limits the policy options available to the President. The “Invitation to Struggle” theory specifically analyzes legislative opposition to a President’s foreign policy initiatives. The theory’s main hypothesis is that this opposition increases the probability that a rival state will challenge the US over its foreign policy.

Schultz argues that the lack of information about a state’s intentions during international crises and disputes creates uncertainty between rival states already plagued by historical enmity. It is difficult to overcome incomplete information, especially between states that have incentives to misinterpret their military intentions and “engage in strategic misrepresentation.”⁴⁷ Rival states do not want to reveal their weaknesses and their intents to their adversaries for fear this will expose them unnecessarily to national security risks. Hence, Schultz argues, “much of state behavior in international crises revolves around efforts to communicate – and exploit – private information and, the outcomes of crises depend crucially on the success or failure of these efforts.”⁴⁸ Information, misinformation, and misperception about the rival state’s

⁴⁵ Leeds, “Domestic Political Vulnerability and International Disputes,” 815, 827.

⁴⁶ ———, “Domestic Political Vulnerability and International Disputes,” 815, 832.

⁴⁷ Schultz, *Democracy and Coercive Diplomacy*, 24.

⁴⁸ ———, *Democracy and Coercive Diplomacy*, 24.

intent lead to misunderstanding that can escalate into military disputes. With respect to understanding US intent, states have the option of studying the country's internal foreign policy debates.

The US Constitution created institutions that ensure open and public debates about a President's policies. Media coverage of such debates informs the American public as well as foreign observers about the disputed policies. "What foreign governments learn from observing the internal communication" within the US can supplement information American leaders convey through diplomacy and outright threats.⁴⁹ Therefore, debate in the US Government reveals the position in which the President finds himself, making it difficult to make military threats on which he cannot follow through. Although Schultz focuses mostly on military policy, I argue that his theory applies for all types of policy dealing with a foreign leader or state.

Political scientists assume that competition within a democratic system is constant as political parties vie for support from the electorate in order to gain or maintain political office. In the President's case, support and opposition to his policies are contingent upon the possible gains a political party might achieve by supporting the policy. This competition between opposition parties creates several effects for a president and his military policies. First, the opposition party can increase the president's credibility, especially regarding the use of force.⁵⁰ The opposition party may base its decision to support the policy on its probability of success since it may result in increased popularity for the president. If they determine that success is probable, members of the opposition party will likely support the policy in order not to lose support while the President increases his. Therefore, by giving its support, the political opposition signals the adversary that the president has the domestic political capital to carry through with the policy.

⁴⁹ ———, *Democracy and Coercive Diplomacy*, 58, 60-61.

⁵⁰ ———, *Democracy and Coercive Diplomacy*, 84.

Political opposition also forces the President to be more selective about the use of force. Congressional debates may reveal the strength of support for a President's policies such as military adventures towards another state, thus making it difficult to "bluff" what options are actually available.⁵¹ Writing specifically about the President's military policies, Brulé writes, "On average, the looming threat that Congress may seek to derail a military operation abroad appears to be sufficient to make presidents think twice before using force."⁵² Such opposition may also limit the President's other foreign policy initiatives.

There are many reasons why a political opposition would want specifically to oppose a President's military policies. The opposition may want to block the use of force if they believe that the President may gain diplomatic or international military prestige at its expense.⁵³ If the opposition believes the war may be unsuccessful, "it will go on record opposing war in order to exploit the resulting political discontent and improve future electoral prospects."⁵⁴ The most important effect this opposition creates is that the adversary "adopts a firmer stand" against the US if he believes the President does not have the political capital to continue the policy.⁵⁵ The opposition, therefore, signals disapproval of Presidential military activity, indicating disunity within the US Government.

There are multitudes of ways that Congress can express opposition to a President's policies. Since members of Congress are public figures, they are highly visible to the American public and known to the international audience. Therefore, any statements they make to support

⁵¹ ———, *Democracy and Coercive Diplomacy*, 9, 84-85.

⁵² Brulé, "Congressional Opposition, the Economy, and U.S. Disruptive Initiation, 1946-2000," 479.

⁵³ Jack S. and William F. Mabe Levy, Jr., "Politically Motivated Opposition to War," *International Studies Review* 6 (2004): 65.

⁵⁴ Levy, "Politically Motivated Opposition to War," 79.

⁵⁵ ———, "Politically Motivated Opposition to War," 79.

or undermine the President's policies are publicized by the news media.⁵⁶ Their Constitutional mandate also gives Congress the power to pass laws or resolutions that contradict a President's policies. In a military campaign, for example, Congress can choose not to appropriate additional funds while demanding immediate troop redeployments under the War Powers Resolution.⁵⁷ Congress can also use committee hearings to stage attacks on key administration figures and policies, and during military campaigns raise concerns over what it perceives to be a failed military strategy.⁵⁸ In addition, members of Congress can also "engage the public directly to reveal and mobilize opposition to what presidents do."⁵⁹ These activities provide credible signals to the domestic and international audience regarding the degree to which the American people support specific policies.⁶⁰ Howell and Pevehouse argue the possibility of such opposition may convince a President not to embark on a military campaign at all, especially on campaigns that Congress has signaled would present him with political risk.⁶¹

Foster supports the strategic conflict avoidance view that domestic problems alone cause other states to avoid challenging the United States because it provides an opportunity for the President to divert attention away from his problems. However, he does submit the idea that legislative opposition to a President's specific foreign policy leaves the United States vulnerable to an adversary's diplomatic or military challenge. Foster writes that such opposition demonstrates a lack of resolve on the President's part to follow through on his foreign policies.

⁵⁶ Foster, "An "Invitation to Struggle"? The Use of Force Against "Legislatively Vulnerable" American Presidents," 427.

⁵⁷ William G. and Jon C. Pevehouse Howell, "Presidents, Congress, and the Use of Force," *International Organization* 59 (Winter 2005): 213.

⁵⁸ Foster, "An "Invitation to Struggle"? The Use of Force Against "Legislatively Vulnerable" American Presidents," 427. Howell, "Presidents, Congress, and the Use of Force," 213.

⁵⁹ Foster, "An "Invitation to Struggle"? The Use of Force Against "Legislatively Vulnerable" American Presidents," 427.

⁶⁰ ———, "An "Invitation to Struggle"? The Use of Force Against "Legislatively Vulnerable" American Presidents," 427.

⁶¹ Howell, "Presidents, Congress, and the Use of Force," 213-214. Brule, "Congressional Opposition, the Economy, and U.S. Disruptive Initiation, 1946-2000," 479.

He further breaks down opposition by political parties, indicating a greater impact to the opposition if a Congress controlled by members of the same political party opposes the President. If the policy directly affects a rival state, then that state may want to challenge the President knowing he lacks the political capital to maintain the policy. Finally, Foster discovers that these challenges are most common when Congressional opposition occurs during periods of “high American inflation” and the policy involves an enduring rival.⁶²

However, this theory has several weaknesses that limit its utility for US military strategists. The first is that the theory confines itself to interstate interactions.⁶³ Therefore, it has utility for rogue states like Iran, North Korea, and especially against an enduring rival like Iraq. Since it is confined to interactions between states, it may not be transferable to non-state actors like al Qaeda, which American leaders have identified as significant threats to the country’s national security.

Mitchell and Prins also argue that theories focusing on domestic problems do not capture the international environment well.⁶⁴ International conditions play as much of a role in a President’s decision to use force as domestic conditions. In fact, Meernik argues that the impact of economic conditions, popularity, and election cycles on the decision to use force is overstated.⁶⁵ Examining domestic conditions without analyzing the international environment may only provide a partial picture for strategists. However, while strategists have no control over the international environment, they may have some control over developing military strategies and shaping the domestic debate that surrounds them. Therefore, it is important to understand the effect of political opposition to a President’s policies.

⁶² Foster, "An "Invitation to Struggle"? The Use of Force Against "Legislatively Vulnerable" American Presidents," 421-422, 439-441.

⁶³ Fordham, "Strategic Conflict Avoidance and the Diversionary Use of Force," 134.

⁶⁴ Mitchell, "Rivalry and Diversionary Uses of Force," 940.

⁶⁵ Meernik, "Presidential Decision Making and the Political Use of Military Force," 136-137.

In the following chapters, I proceed by examining the context surrounding the debate within the United States over President Bush's Iraq policy through three of the four theoretical lenses investigated in this chapter.⁶⁶ First, the Democratic Party, seeing their gains in the polls dissipate, accused the Bush administration, and the Republican Party, of using war rhetoric against Iraq to divert attention from domestic economic turmoil in order to gain momentum prior to the 2002 midterm elections. I aim to determine whether those allegations had any merit. Second, I suggest that the timing for the Congressional vote on the resolution to provide Bush the authority to use military force against Iraq prior to the elections was no accident. The Bush administration knew the implications of the midterm elections and used the Democrats' desire to regain control of both Houses of Congress against them. In addition, the administration understood that powerful Senators with designs for the Presidency did not want to vote against what many presumed to be a sure American victory over Iraq and risk their political futures. Thus, a public debate and vote over the resolution was necessary to limit opposition and bolster his credibility. Finally, I want to determine whether Saddam Hussein reacted to the debate in the United States. Did opposition to Bush's policy of "regime change" embolden Saddam, and did he appear to back down once Bush received support from Congress?

⁶⁶ While related to diversionary theory, strategic conflict avoidance did not pertain to the issues related to the 2002 Iraq war debate. Therefore, I chose not to analyze the debate through this perspective.

Chapter 3

The Iraq Debate through Three Theoretical “Lenses”

In previous chapters, I presented four separate theories that examined the effect of domestic debate on a state’s foreign military policy: diversionary theory of war, strategic conflict avoidance, coercive democracy, and the “Invitation to Struggle Theory.” In this chapter, I analyze the context surrounding the debate that ensued in the US over the Bush administration’s decision to invade the Iraq and oust Saddam Hussein from power. I examine the context surrounding the debate through three of the four theoretical perspectives previously discussed and show how proponents of each perspective might interpret the debate. The fourth perspective, strategic conflict avoidance, though related to diversionary theory, did not pertain to Iraq, and thus, was not used to analyze the 2002 Iraq war debate.

Proponents of the diversionary theory of war might view the debate as an attempt by the Bush administration and his Republican supporters in Congress to divert attention from the country’s economic troubles in order to win seats in the 2002 midterm elections and gain a majority in both Houses of Congress. Already reeling from rising unemployment, the September 11 terrorist attacks only accelerated an economic decline that increased the unemployment rate to 6.0% by April 2002. This, along with the Democratic push to focus on domestic issues, with which the Party has historically had success, affected American public opinion and threatened the November elections for the Republicans.¹ In addition, the corporate scandal at Enron implicated administration officials and threatened to turn the American public against Bush and the Republican Party. Therefore, proponents of diversionary theory would argue that the President and his cabinet accelerated the Iraq debate in Congress in order to divert attention from

¹ George F. Will, "The Last Word: On the Health of the State," *Newsweek* 138, no. 14 (October 2001): 70.

domestic issues and focus on foreign policy in order to gain Republican seats in the November midterm elections.

Proponents of coercive democracy theory would explain the Bush administration's decision for accelerating the debate as a way to limit opposition to the resolution. Having Congress deliberate over Iraq prior to the midterm elections ensured that those Congressmen and Senators in close election races around the country would support the President's resolution. The Democrats, especially, did not want to appear weak on foreign policy prior to the critical elections. In addition, it ensured that powerful Democratic Party members, with future Presidential ambitions, would support a joint resolution giving the President the authority to attack Iraq. Finally, by pushing Congress to vote on the resolution quickly and thus limiting opposition, he could help show his resolve to the UN. Such resolve, the administration hoped, would be useful in attaining a new UN Security Council Resolution. Indeed, with the support of the US Congress, President Bush's threats to remove Saddam from power gained much-needed credibility with the international community and the UN.

Proponents of the "Invitation to Struggle" tailor the theory to the US experience. They argue that adversaries observe the domestic political conditions in the US and challenge the President on his policies when there is obvious opposition from Congress. Evidence from media reports and public statements showed that Saddam Hussein observed and reacted to the debate that ensued in the US during a period when the President's Iraq policy lacked clarity and faced criticism from members of Congress. Unable to defeat the US militarily, Hussein used diplomacy and the UN inspections process to challenge the US.

Iraq as a Diversion: A Cynical Look at the 2002 – 2003 Iraq Debate

The American dream is slipping away, and all the people hear from Washington, D.C., is war talk, so loud as to drown out the voices of the American people calling for help.

Rep. Dennis Kucinich (D-OH)
October 10, 2002

In a September 2002 *US News and World Report* article, Democratic strategist and former Clinton administration press secretary Joe Lockhart accused President Bush and the Republican party of using Iraq as a diversion from the economic distress the United States faced that year to gain momentum prior to the 2002 midterm elections. He said, “They’re using a fight they waited to have with Saddam Hussein directly for political advantage ... They realized the midterms were slipping away on the basis of the economy, and now they’re using foreign policy” to take the initiative away from the Democrats.²

The idea may seem preposterous, at first. However, proponents of the diversionary theory of war hypothesized a scenario such as the one Lockhart described. A President uses war to engender the rally effect and manipulate support from the electorate prior to critical elections in democratic states like the US. However, the question remains, do Lockhart’s accusations have merit? I use the first section of this chapter to answer this question.

The 2002 midterm elections provide the context surrounding this debate. This was a critical election for President Bush and the Republican Party. Many presumed that they wanted to increase their majority in the House of Representatives and regain it in the Senate to make it easier to push their agendas in the future.

First, I examine the economic situation in the United States. The unemployment rate and the stock market conditions, as indicated by the

² Kenneth T. Walsh, “Words of War,” *U.S. News and World Report* September 23, 2002, 37-38.

Dow Jones Industrial Average (Dow), provide a look at the general “health” and condition of the United States economy from 2001-2002.³ I also look at the Enron scandal, which affected the American people’s confidence in corporations. I then review the polling data to determine the impact of these conditions on voters. Polls taken before and after the elections also identified the key issues that may have affected the outcome of the elections. This is a cynical view of the Presidency and American politics. However, this section will show that poor economic conditions influenced public opinion, which favored the Democrats in the elections. The Republicans lost their lead in the polls and the public viewed the economy as the most important issue affecting their votes in November. As the Iraq debate accelerated in September 2002, however, foreign policy regained its prominence with the American electorate, which may have helped the Republicans achieve their majority in both houses after the November elections.

The first signs of economic distress in the US appeared before George W. Bush took office on January 2001.⁴ Despite growing concern over the economy, however, Bush still inherited a 4.2% unemployment rate from his predecessor Bill Clinton. This was relatively low, especially when compared with the jobless rates of the previous 10 years. The unemployment rate remained steady at 4.2% throughout the first quarter of 2001, and the media showed only mild concern about a possible downturn in the American economy.⁵ The unemployment rate rose 0.3%

³ Dow Jones, "Five Questions About the Dow You Always Wanted to Ask," (December 31, 2009 http://www.djindexes.com/mdsidx/downloads/brochure_info/Five_Questions_Brochure.pdf (accessed 1 May 2010)).

⁴ Adam Cohen, Bernard Baumohl, Carole Buia, Eric Roston, Jeffrey Ressen and Mark Thompson, "Economic Slowdown: This Time It's Different," *Time* January 8, 2001 <http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,998908,00.html> (accessed 1 May 2010). Stephen S. Roach, "The Recession We Need," *New York Times* January 4, 2001 <http://www.nytimes.com/2001/01/04/opinion/the-recession-we-need.html?scp=16&sq=us+economy&st=nyt> (accessed 1 May 2010).

⁵ The author makes this statement after surveying articles pertaining the United States economy in the *New York Times*, *Time Magazine Online*, and *US News and World Report* articles from January 2001 through December 2001. Most articles describe signs of possible economic downturns, but the tone of the articles is not one of “panic.”

to 4.5% in April, the largest one-month increase since the first Bush administration in February 1991.⁶ It remained steady between 4.4% and 4.5% through July 2001.⁷ The increased jobless rate that began in April 2001 corresponded with a drop in stock market prices as indicated by the Dow, which dipped to its lowest levels since 1999. The Dow recovered slightly through the summer before dropping below the 10,000 mark just prior to the 9/11 attacks.⁸

Polls taken prior to the 9/11 attacks show growing American concern about the economy. After the April unemployment rate increased, a USA Today/Gallup Poll asked Americans to “rate economic conditions in [the US] today – as excellent, good, only fair, or poor.”⁹ Of those surveyed, 3% rated the economy as “excellent”, 37% “good”, 45% “only fair”, and 15% rated the economy “poor”. The polls also showed that 25% thought the economy was getting better and 63% getting worse.¹⁰ Americans were clearly concerned about the economy, but polls did not indicate anything approaching panic.

Genuine concern about the United States economy began to appear in the media in August and in the weeks prior to the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks. Examining newspaper and magazine articles in July, August, and early September 2001 reveals that stimulating a lagging economy and stopping a growing unemployment rate, which had grown to 4.9% by August, was one of President Bush’s most pressing issues.¹¹ A USA Today/Gallup Poll taken in the days prior to the September 11 attacks confirmed the American people’s increased

⁶ Louis Uchitell, “U.S. Jobless Rate Hit 4.5% in April; 223,000 Jobs Lost,” *New York Times Online* May 5, 2001 <http://www.nytimes.com/2001/05/05/business/us-jobless-rate-hit-4.5-in-april-223000-jobs-lost.html?scp=74&sq=us+economy&st=nyt> (accessed 1 May 2010).

⁷ Bureau of Labor Statistics, “Selected Unemployment Rates,” (2010 <http://data.bls.gov/cgi-bin/survey/most> (accessed 2 May 2010)).

⁸ Dow Jones, “The Dow Jones Industrial Average Historical Timeline,” 2010 <http://www.djaverages.com/?view=ilc> (accessed 1 May 2010).

⁹ As cited in Polling Report.com, “Economic Outlook.”

¹⁰ As cited in ———, “Economic Outlook.”

¹¹ Carney, “Is This Your Father’s Recession,” 26-30. Bureau of Labor Statistics, “Selected Unemployment Rates.”

economic concerns as only 30% rated the economy “good”, 49% “only fair”, and 19% rated it “poor”. Of those polled, 70% felt that the economy was getting worse.¹²

The 9/11 attacks accelerated the downward trend of the US economy and brought increased hardship to Americans as the unemployment rate jumped to 5.4% in October and remained around 5.6% throughout the first half of 2002.¹³ The Dow dipped to its lowest levels since 1998 less than 2 weeks after the attacks but recovered enough in the first quarter of 2002 to engender some optimism in the polls.¹⁴ By July 2002, it became obvious that Wall Street was in the midst of a “28-month bear – the longest in more than a half century.”¹⁵ The S&P 500 and the NASDAQ had hit five-year lows and the Dow industrials dipped below 8000 for the first time since the August 1998.¹⁶ An August 2002 USA Today/Gallup Poll survey show that 28% of those surveyed rated the economy “poor” compared to 19% in September.¹⁷ More importantly for Republican prospects in the midterm elections, a CNN/USA Today/Gallup Poll taken in August showed 55% of Americans saw “economic conditions” as the most important issue affecting their vote in the November elections.¹⁸

The unemployment rate and the stock market revealed a struggling American economy, but terrorism concerns and the war in Afghanistan created a rally effect that kept economic concerns out of the media spotlight after the 9/11 attacks. As the campaign against the Taliban

¹² As cited in Polling Report.com, “Economic Outlook.”

¹³ Bureau of Labor Statistics, “Selected Unemployment Rates.” James M. Pethokoukis, Noam Neusner and Paul J. Lim “Economy Terrorized: From Wall Street to Main Street, Layoffs, Losses, and Little Hope ” *US News and World Report* September 23, 2001 http://www.usnews.com/usnews/biztech/articles/011001/archive_007695_2.htm (accessed 22 April 2010).

¹⁴ Dow Jones, “The Dow Jones Industrial Average Historical Timeline.”

¹⁵ James M. Pethokoukis, “What the #!!@% Do I Do Now?,” *US News and World Report* July 29, 2002, 24.

¹⁶ Pethokoukis, “What the #!!@% Do I Do Now?,” 24. Dow Jones, “The Dow Jones Industrial Average Historical Timeline.”

¹⁷ As cited in Polling Report.com, “Economic Outlook.”

¹⁸ As cited in ———, “Election 2002,” <http://www.pollingreport.com/2002.htm> (accessed 5 May 2010).

and Al Qaeda wound down in Afghanistan, however, the tone in the country changed as both political parties braced for the November 2002 elections. The patriotic fervor that had Americans rallying around President Bush after September 11, 2001 began to dissipate in January 2002 and all but disappeared by the summer of 2002 as the American people and Democratic politicians attempted to steer attention away from foreign policy towards domestic issues, including the Enron corporate scandal.¹⁹

According to political scientists, the voting public judges a President's leadership competence in two ways: his foreign affairs acumen, and his economic policies.²⁰ The Democrats understood that they could not defeat the Republicans on foreign policy issues because the President enjoyed unprecedented job approval ratings due to his leadership in the war on terror. Republican candidates for Congress were merely riding his coattails straight to or back to Washington, D.C. The Democrats turned to domestic issues, their historical strongpoint, to gain voter support prior to the November elections.²¹

The attacks on the Bush administration's and the Republican Party's economic policies began almost immediately in 2002. On January 4, Senate Majority Leader Tom Daschle (D-SD) attacked the President's economic policies, saying the tax cut the Republicans pushed in 2001 "failed to prevent a recession" and "probably made [it] worse."²² The tax cuts, he continued, led to dwindling budget surpluses that left Americans struggling in a weak economy and jeopardized national security. Daschle and the Democrats argued that the tax cuts reduced financing available for unemployment benefits, as the jobless rate

¹⁹ Kenneth T. Walsh, "Nation & World: Bush by the Numbers," *US News and World Report* July 29, 2002, 18.

²⁰ Hess, "War Politics: An Economic, Rational-Voter Framework," 828-829.

²¹ Will, "The Last Word: On the Health of the State," 70.

²² Allison Mitchell, "Democrat Assails Bush on Economy," *New York Times Online* January 5, 2002 <http://www.nytimes.com/2002/01/05/us/democrat-assails-bush-on-economy.html?scp=185&sq=us+economy&st=nyt> (accessed 30 April 2010).

increased to 5.8% in December, and also reduced finances available for homeland security.²³ Daschle attempted to tie the Republicans' policies to the current economic downturn and reminded the American people of the Democrats' policies in the 1990s, which turned a \$290 billion deficit to a \$236 billion budget surplus by 2000.²⁴ The Democrats' initial attempts to focus the political debate from foreign policy to domestic issues yielded marginal returns as Americans still slightly favored Republican candidates in polls taken in January and February 2002.²⁵ The war on terrorism and the 9/11 attacks were still fresh in the minds of Americans, and the Bush administration's push towards a war with Iraq ensured it stayed there.

In his first State of the Union Address to the Nation after the September 11, 2001 attacks, President George W. Bush thrust Iraq into the center of American policy to defeat global terrorism. In the speech, he designated three states, North Korea, Iran, and Iraq, the "Axis of Evil." These states earned the moniker because they are active sponsors of global terrorism. On Iraq, the President said

Iraq continues to flaunt its hostility toward America and to support terror. The Iraq regime has plotted to develop anthrax, and nerve gas, and nuclear weapons for over a decade. This is a regime that has already used poison gas to murder thousands of its own citizens... This is a regime that agreed to international inspections – then kicked out the inspectors. This is a regime that has something to hide from the civilized world. States like [Iraq] and their terrorist allies constitute an axis of evil, arming to threaten the peace of the world.²⁶

²³ Frank Pellegrini, "Campaign 2002: Once Again, It's the Economy," *Time* January 4, 2002 <http://www.time.com/time/nation/article/0,8599,190606,00.html> (accessed 30 April 2010). Bureau of Labor Statistics, "Selected Unemployment Rates."

²⁴ Mitchell, "Democrat Assails Bush on Economy."

²⁵ David W. Moore, "Republicans Lead in Congressional Races Among 'Regular Voters'," *Gallup.com* January 18, 2002 <http://www.gallup.com/poll/5197/Republicans-Lead-Democrats-Congressional-Races-Among-Regular-Voters.aspx> (accessed 4 May 2010). David W. Moore, "Republicans Maintain Narrow Lead over Democrats in Congressional Races," *Gallup.com* February 21, 2002 <http://www.gallup.com/poll/5362/Republicans-Maintain-Narrow-Lead-Over-Democrats-Congressional-Races.aspx> (accessed 4 May 2010).

²⁶ George W. Bush, "Address before a Joint Session of the Congress on the State of the Union," *Weekly Compilation of Presidential Documents* 38, no. 5 (January 29, 2002): 135. "Threats and

Bush's State of the Union address suggested that the three countries posed an imminent threat to the United States and thus America "must be prepared to act preemptively" to remove such threats.²⁷ The speech began the debate within United States policymaking circles regarding the role Iraq and its leader Saddam Hussein played in international terrorism, but the debate over the policy to deal with the issue did not gain momentum until summer. Knowing that the weak economy would help lead them to victory in November, the Democrats tried to thrust economic issues to the forefront of debates throughout the summer.

The economy and corporate scandals threatened to take the initiative away from the Bush administration and the Republicans prior to the elections. The economy remained stagnant throughout the spring as the unemployment rate rose to 6.0% in April and hovered just below that number through the summer.²⁸ One of the biggest economic issues confronting the Bush administration and the Republicans was the corporate scandals at energy giant Enron. The company's chair, Ken Lay, was one of President Bush's largest campaign contributors. Allegedly, he contacted Bush administration officials for assistance prior to the company's collapse.²⁹ The scandal put the Bush administration and the Republicans on the defensive and gave the Democrats an advantage in the polls. A Democratic strategist commented that it

Responses: Bush's Speech on Iraq, 'Saddam Hussein and His Sons Must Leave', *New York Times* March 18, 2003, <http://www.nytimes.com/2003/03/18/us/threats-responses-bush-s-speech-iraq-saddam-hussein-his-sons-must-leave.html?scp=2&sq=bush%20iraq&st=nyt> (accessed 4 March 2010).

²⁷ Massimo Calabresi, "The Axis of Evil: Is It for Real?," *Time* 159, no. 6 (February 2002): 31.

²⁸ Bureau of Labor Statistics, "Selected Unemployment Rates."

²⁹ Elisabeth Bumiller, "Enron's Collapse: The Overview, Enron Contacted 2 Cabinet Officers before Collapsing," *New York Times* January 11, 2002 <http://www.nytimes.com/2002/01/11/us/enron-s-collapse-overview-enron-contacted-2-cabinet-officers-before-collapsing.html?scp=190&sq=us+economy&st=nyt> (accessed 30 April 2010).

helped his party make the case “that Republicans are a party of special interests and big business.”³⁰

Changing the focus from foreign policy to the economy may have helped the Democrats gain some advantage with potential voters beginning in April 2002. An April 2 Gallup poll showed that the Democrats were gaining on the Republicans as each enjoyed 46% support from likely voters in the November elections. According to David Moore of the Gallup organization, this was significant because the Republicans enjoyed an advantage over the Democrats in the previous four polls taken since the September 11 attacks.³¹ A poll taken later in April 2002 showed that the Democrats led the Republicans for the first time since the summer of 2001.³²

The common thread throughout the summer was increasing public anxiety about the stagnant economy. June surveys revealed that the Democratic tactics were working, as the economy became the issue about which Americans were most concerned. The results of a survey taken by independent pollster John Zogby showed that the Democrats gained some ground on the Republicans regarding economic issues. A survey taken earlier showed Republicans with a 6-point lead over Democrats when pollsters asked which political party would be most likely to fix the US economy.³³ A CBS News/New York Times poll taken July 2002 showed that 52% of Americans believed the country was headed in the wrong direction. Walsh suggested that media coverage of corporate scandals had the public questioning “the economy’s

³⁰ ———, “Enron's Collapse: The Politics,” *New York Times* January 12, 2002 <http://www.nytimes.com/2002/01/12/business/enron-s-collapse-the-politics-parties-weigh-political-price-of-enron-s-fall.html?scp=191&sq=us+economy&st=nyt> (accessed 30 April 2010).

³¹ David W. Moore, “Republicans, Democrats Tied in Congressional Races,” *Gallup.com* April 2, 2002 <http://www.gallup.com/poll/5557/Republicans-Democrats-Tied-Congressional-Races.aspx> (accessed 30 April 2010).

³² ———, “Democrats Gain Upper Hand in Gallup Test Election for Congress,” *Gallup.com* April 11, 2002 <http://www.gallup.com/poll/5602/Democrats-Gain-Upper-Hand-Gallup-Test-Election-Congress.aspx> (accessed 30 April 2010).

³³ Karen Tumulty, “It's the Economy,” *CNN.com* June 24, 2002 <http://archives.cnn.com/2002/ALLPOLITICS/06/24/time.notebook/index.html> (accessed 30 April 2010).

soundness” influenced this finding.³⁴ A CNN/USA Today Gallup Poll taken on August 21, 2002 illustrates growing concern over the economy as 55% of people surveyed said the economy was the most important issue that would sway their vote in the 2002 midterm elections. By September 4, the percentage of people concerned about the economy increased to 57%, while the Iraq issue sank to 34%.³⁵ “With both the White House and Republicans on the defensive, Democrats hoped that the unfolding corporate scandals” and the fledgling economy would “allow them to engage the GOP on an even footing” in the run-up to elections.³⁶

However, the Zogby surveys also revealed that the Republicans had a significant lead over Democrats in foreign policy. It was therefore critical for the Democrats to put domestic issues on the agenda while it was critical for the Republicans to put foreign policy at the forefront of debates prior to the midterm elections.³⁷

As October approached, the Iraq debate was in full swing and the Bush administration was able to switch the issue back to foreign policy. Surveys taken from September 20-22 revealed that 49% of Americans viewed Iraq as the issue that “will be most important” to their vote compared to only 34% and 36% in the previous 2 polls.³⁸

How was the Bush administration able to grab the issues away from the Democrats so close to the elections? Bush began “campaigning” for a new approach to Iraq in June. In a June 2002 speech given to the graduating class of the United States Military Academy at West Point, President Bush outlined a doctrine of preemptive attack. He said, “The war on terror will not be won on the defensive. We must take the battle to the enemy, disrupt his plans, and confront the worst threats before

³⁴ Walsh, “Nation & World: Bush by the Numbers,” 18-19.

³⁵ Michael Barone, “The Democrats’ Dilemma,” *US News and World Report* October 7, 2002, 32. Polling Report.com, “Election 2002.”

³⁶ Walsh, “Nation & World: Bush by the Numbers,” 20.

³⁷ Tumulty, “It’s the Economy.”

³⁸ Barone, “The Democrats’ Dilemma,” 32.

they emerge. In the world we have entered, the only path to safety is the path of action. And this nation will act.”³⁹ Bush did not address Iraq but hinted at Hussein when he spoke of “tyrants” who seek to harm Americans with weapons of mass destruction.⁴⁰

The President and his staff spent most of August debating the administration’s Iraq policy. While the President indicated as early as February 2002 that he wanted to topple Saddam Hussein from power, the rest of his cabinet was divided over how and when to accomplish this task due to concerns that the United States may alienate itself from its European allies.⁴¹ Hawks in the administration thought the issue was clear. In an August 26 speech he said, “We now know that Saddam has resumed his efforts to acquire nuclear weapons ... Many of us are convinced that Saddam will acquire nuclear weapons fairly soon.”⁴² Secretary of State Powell, however, disagreed and advocated for getting the UN involved. Thus, throughout July and August 2002, the administration lacked a real policy on Iraq, but received constant pressure from the media and Congress over its Iraq war plans.

Ironically, critics of the administration’s war plans helped to propel the debate towards foreign policy. In an August 15 *Wall Street Journal* op-ed “Brent Scowcroft – dean of conservative realists – warned that the war on terrorism would require a broad and effective coalition. Military action against Iraq could endanger international cooperation and thus was a bad idea.”⁴³ Scowcroft urged the Bush administration to delay attacking Iraq. In addition, Democratic Senator Joseph Biden, the Chairman of the US Senate Committee on Foreign Relations, in an attempt to influence policy actually helped to accelerate the debate on

³⁹ "Text of Bush's Speech at West Point," *New York Times* June 1, 2002
<http://www.nytimes.com/2002/06/01/international/02PTX-WEB.html> (accessed 4 May 2010).

⁴⁰ "Text of Bush's Speech at West Point."

⁴¹ Massimo Calabresi, "Ousting Saddam: Can It Be Done?," *Time* 159, no. 8 (February 2002).
Tony Karon, "Iraq: The GOP War with Itself," *Time* August 21, 2002

<http://www.time.com/time/nation/article/0,8599,339186,00.html> (accessed 30 April 2010).

⁴² Haass, *War of Necessity, War of Choice: A Memoir of Two Iraq Wars*, 216-218.

⁴³ Metz, *Iraq and the Evolution of American Strategy*, 104-105.

Iraq and turned attention away from economic concerns. The hearing, however, was coordinated with and encouraged by the White House, although they deferred sending a representative to present their case for a later date.⁴⁴ White House coordination and encouragement supports the argument that the administration may have wanted to turn the nation's attention away from domestic issues.

By September, the administration's policy was clear: "Hussein poses a serious threat to the American people" and it "was the policy of the Government" to change the regime in Iraq.⁴⁵ President Bush and senior cabinet officials used every opportunity to highlight the threat Hussein posed to the rest of the world. Bush used his September 12 United Nations speech to advance his Iraq policy and convince the world body to pass a resolution against Iraq. He based his case against Iraq on their weapons of mass destruction program and breaking multiple resolutions since the end of Operation DESERT STORM. He repeated several times during his speech that Iraq broke multiple UN Security council resolutions including resolutions prohibiting the development of WMD. He urged against standing by and doing nothing "while the dangers gather" because Al Qaeda terrorists had escaped from Afghanistan "and are known to be in Iraq."⁴⁶ Saddam Hussein, it was presumed, would provide these terrorists chemical and biological weapons with which to attack the West.

Bush argued throughout September, "You can't distinguish between Al Qaida and Saddam when you talk about the war on terror.

⁴⁴ United States Congress, *United States Policy toward Iraq: Hearing before the United States Congress House of Representatives Committee on Armed Services*, 1-2. Metz, *Iraq and the Evolution of American Strategy*, 122.

⁴⁵ George W. Bush, "Remarks Following a Meeting with Secretary of State Colin L. Powell and an Exchange with Reporters, September 19, 2002," *Weekly Compilation of Presidential Documents* 38, no. 38 (September 23, 2002): 1580. George W. Bush, "Remarks Following a Visit with Homeland Security Employees and an Exchange with Reporters, September 19, 2002," *Weekly Compilation of Presidential Documents* 38 (September 23, 2002): 1581. Haass, *War of Necessity, War of Choice: A Memoir of Two Iraq Wars*, 228-229.

⁴⁶ Bush, "Address to the United Nations General Assembly in New York City, September 12, 2002," 1529-1531, 1533.

And so it's a comparison that is – I can't make because I can't distinguish between the two, because they're both equally as bad and equally as evil and equally as destructive."⁴⁷ After President Bush spoke at the United Nations, "the White House presented a draft resolution to the Republican and Democrat leaders of the House and Senate to authorize [President Bush] to use military force against Iraq, should it fail to relinquish its weapons of mass destruction and associated program[s]."⁴⁸

The debate in Congress over the President's resolution ensured that Iraq and foreign policy, not the economy, dominated the news media immediately prior to the November elections. The polls showed that the Iraq debate shaped public opinion in favor of the Republicans. A CNN/USA Today/Gallup Poll survey showed that Americans' attention prior to the elections shifted to Iraq. Among likely voters surveyed on October 21-22, 47% identified "war with Iraq" as the most important issue to affect their vote in November compared with 39% who identified "economic conditions".⁴⁹ Among all adults, the polls showed a significant increase in concern over Iraq in a survey taken September 20-22. Of those surveyed, 49% identified "war with Iraq" as an important issue for the November elections compared with only 34% and 39% the previous two surveys. Although the economy was still the most important issue for Americans at 47% compared to 40% for Iraq in a survey taken October 21-22, the growing focus on the war with Iraq shows that war rhetoric affected public opinion prior to the elections.⁵⁰

Even more important for the Republicans was their ability to use this changing public emphasis to turn the tide against the Democrats,

⁴⁷ George W. Bush, "Remarks Prior to Discussions with President Alvaro Uribe of Colombia and an Exchange with Reporters. September 25, 2002," *Weekly Compilation of Presidential Documents* 38, no. 39 (September 30, 2002): 1619.

⁴⁸ Nick Ritchie and Paul Rogers, *The Political Road to War with Iraq : Bush, 9/11 and the Drive to Overthrow Saddam* (New York, NY: Routledge, 2007), 118.

⁴⁹ As cited in Polling Report.com, "Election 2002."

⁵⁰ As cited in ———, "Election 2002."

who had been gaining in the polls during the summer due to the flailing economy. At the height of Americans' great concern for the economy in the summer, polls showed that the Democrats, for the first time since pre-9/11, led the Republicans in surveys asking Americans which party they preferred to control Congress.⁵¹ Those surveyed also preferred the democratic candidate in their district.⁵²

The 2002 midterm election results speak for themselves. The Republicans gained 8 seats in the House of Representatives and gained seats in the Senate to take the majority in both houses. "For the first time in United States History, the president's party gained seats in the House during the administration's first midterm elections."⁵³ After the elections, deposed Daschle admitted that foreign policy issues affected the outcome. "The war in Iraq [and other foreign policy issues] ... probably precluded us from having the opportunity to break through with the issues we wanted to talk about the most."⁵⁴

Proponents would argue that diversionary theory best explains the Iraq debate that took place in summer 2002. The US was in the midst of economic problems with Bush administration officials allegedly embroiled in the Enron scandal. Polls taken in summer 2002 indicate that the American people, for the first time since summer 2001, were more concerned about the economy than foreign policy issues like Iraq.

⁵¹ CNN/USA Today/Gallup Poll asked "Do you think the country would be better off if the Republicans controlled Congress or if the Democrats controlled Congress." 7/5-7/8 – 40% Republicans, 39% Democrats. 7/29-7/31 – 38% Republicans, 39% Democrats.

⁵² CNN/USA Today/Gallup Poll asked "If the elections for Congress were being held today, which party's candidate would you vote for in your congressional district?" Among likely voters the results were as follows: 9/20-9/22 – 46% Republican, 50% Democrat, 4% Undecided. 10/3-1/6 – 47% Republican, 48% Democrat, 5% Undecided. 10/21-10/22 – 46% Republican, 49% Democrat, 5% Undecided. 10/31-11/02 – 51% Republican, 45% Democrat, 4% Undecided. ABC New Poll asked "If the election for the U.S. House of Representatives were being held today, would you vote for the Democratic candidate or the Republican candidate in your district?" 9/23-9/26 – 47% Republican, 49% Democrat. 10/24-10/27 – 49% Republican, 47% Democrat. 10/31-11/02 – 48% Republican, 48% Democrat. As cited in Polling Report.com, "Election 2002."

⁵³ John King, "White House: We've Made History," *CNN.com* November 6, 2002.

<http://archives.cnn.com/2002/ALLPOLITICS/11/06/elec02.bush/> (accessed 5 May 2010).

⁵⁴ Josh Tyrangiel, Matthew Cooper, Viveca Novak, Douglas Waller and Michael Weisskopf, "Election 2002: Looking Ahead to 2004," *Time* November 18, 2002 <http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,1003693-2,00.html> (accessed 5 May 2010).

In addition, polls indicated that the Democrats were gaining on the Republicans, which jeopardized the party's candidates for the midterm elections. Thus, it was in the Democrats' interests to ensure the American people continued to focus on the country's economic problems as the elections approached. The polls, however, also indicated that the voting public trusted the Republicans with the country's national security. Thus, Republican Party candidates benefitted when the Bush administration decided their Iraq policy and launched a campaign to garner support from Congress and the international community. Despite the weakening economy, the Iraq debate enabled the Bush administration and the Republican Party to gain momentum prior to the midterm elections. As a result, the Republican Party was able to gain control of both Houses of Congress.

Bush "Pushes" Congress for a Resolution to Reinforce Credibility

*By supporting the resolution now before them,
Members of Congress will send a clear message to
Saddam: His only choice is to fully comply with the
demands of the world ... Supporting this resolution
will also show resolve of the United States and will
help spur the United Nations to act.*

President George W. Bush
President's Radio Address, October 5, 2002

After speaking at the UN in September 2002, President Bush submitted a resolution to Congress authorizing him to initiate military action against Iraq. Most importantly, the President and members of his administration pushed Congress to accelerate the debate in order to vote on the resolution prior to the November 2002 midterm elections.⁵⁵ The resolution "led to a number of debates and open and closed hearings in

⁵⁵ Louis Fisher, "Legislative-Executive Relations and Us Policy toward Iraq," in *Presidential Policies and the Road to the Second Iraq War*, ed. John Davis (Burlington, VT: Ashgate Publishing, 2006), 78.

both Houses of Congress.”⁵⁶ The Senate and House of Representatives debated the resolution presented by the White House for two days in October. The House of Representatives passed the bill by a vote of 296 – 133 (215 Republicans, 81 Democrats).⁵⁷ The Senate passed the bill with a vote of 77 – 33 (48 Republicans, 29 Democrats).⁵⁸ On signing the bill into law a few days later, President Bush said,

By passing H.J. Res 114, the Congress has demonstrated that the United States speaks with one voice on the threat to international peace and security posed by Iraq. It has also clearly communicated to the international community, to the United Nations Security Council, and ... to Iraq’s tyrannical regime a powerful and important message: the days of Iraq flouting the will of the world, brutalizing its own people, and terrorizing its neighbors must – and will – end. I hope that Iraq will choose compliance and peace, and I believe passage of this resolution makes that choice more likely.⁵⁹

In this section, I analyze the timing of the Iraq debate through the coercive democracy perspective. I will make the case that President Bush and his advisers deliberately accelerated the debate over the resolution to limit opposition. By “forcing” Congress to vote on the resolution before the critical midterm elections, the President ensured that Congressmen and Senators in close races would support it.⁶⁰ The US Constitution gives the President the implied power to use force in the nation’s defense. Thus, he did not require a resolution to authorize his use of force. However, presenting a resolution for a vote in Congress

⁵⁶ Ritchie and Rogers, *The Political Road to War with Iraq : Bush, 9/11 and the Drive to Overthrow Saddam*, 118.

⁵⁷ United States House of Representatives, "Final Vote Results for Roll Call 455: To Authorize the Use of United States Armed Forces against Iraq," <http://clerk.house.gov/evs/2002/roll455.xml> (accessed 5 May 2010).

⁵⁸ United States Senate, "U.S. Senate Roll Call Votes 107th Congress - 2nd Session: On the Joint Resolution (H.J.Res. 114)," http://www.senate.gov/legislative/LIS/roll_call_lists/roll_call_vote_cfm.cfm?congress=107&session=2&vote=00237 (accessed 5 May 2010).

⁵⁹ George W. Bush, "Statement on Signing the Authorization for Use of Military Force against Iraq Resolution of 2002, October 16, 2002," *Weekly Compilation of Presidential Documents* 38, no. 42 (October 21, 2002): 1779.

⁶⁰ As cited in Polling Report.com, "President Bush - Overall Job Ratings," <http://www.pollingreport.com/BushJob.htm> (accessed 5 May 2010).

guaranteed that a public debate would ensue. The public debate had several purposes. It almost guaranteed that powerful Democratic Senators, with Presidential aspirations for 2004, would support the resolution. The Bush administration used the debate over the resolution as a public forum through which he advertised his credibility to pursue his policy of removing Hussein from power. It publicly demonstrated to Hussein and the international community that Bush had the domestic political capital to carry through on his threats. Since the beginning of 2002, he had wanted a regime change in Iraq, but he had not had adequate support from Congressional leaders. The timing of the resolution vote ensured that they were behind him. Finally, Bush hinted that the UN's authority was at stake if the Security Council continued to let Saddam defy resolutions.⁶¹ However, the UN would not act on Bush's accusations unless he had political backing in the US. Consequently, his credibility at the UN was at stake and failure to convince Congress to pass the resolution would ensure that Hussein would continue to be a nuisance to his administration.

Several components of this perspective are especially critical to the arguments presented in this section. First, coercive democracy presumes that the desire to remain in power or to gain political power motivates the actions of members of political parties. Therefore, members of political parties will act in order not to jeopardize their standing with the electorate. Second, by supporting the President's policies, a political opposition sends a clear signal to the adversary and the international community that the Chief Executive has the political backing to follow through with his policies.⁶²

The President and his cabinet clearly understood the implications of initiating the vote prior to the November elections. The Democrats

⁶¹ Bush, "Address to the United Nations General Assembly in New York City, September 12, 2002," 1532.

⁶² Schultz, *Democracy and Coercive Diplomacy*, 83-84.

certainly understood what it meant for their political party as well. In the days leading up to the debate and voting on the resolution, they worried about the impact of the vote on the midterm elections. Many believed that a vote against the resolution could spell defeat for their candidates.⁶³ Some analysts believed that due to the party's philosophy, most Democrats probably did not support the resolution.⁶⁴ However, opposing a popular President on one of his key foreign policy initiatives deterred them from voting against the resolution, as a vote against it might have meant the difference between winning and losing in the upcoming midterm.⁶⁵ Comparing Senate and House roll call votes to the 2002 election results supports this contention. This phenomenon was especially evident in the Senate races.

In the 2002 midterms, the Senate had 34 seats in contention. Of the 34 Senate races, 25 were incumbents. Breaking down their votes, 22 of the incumbents voted for the President's resolution and three voted against it. There were 14 Republican incumbents, all of whom voted for the resolution. Of the 14, only Arkansas Republican Senator Hutchison lost his Senate seat to Democrat Mark Pryor 54% - 46%.⁶⁶ There were 11 Democratic incumbents vying to retain their seats. Of those, eight voted for the resolution and three voted against it. Six of the eight who voted in favor regained their seats while two did not: Senator Carnahan of Missouri and Senator Cleland of Georgia. All three Democrats who voted against the resolution won their Senate races.

⁶³ Gloria Borger, "High Anxiety for Democrats," *US News and World Report* September 30, 2002, 48.

⁶⁴ Allison Mitchell, "Democrats, Wary of War in Iraq, Also Worry About Battling Bush," *New York Times Online*, September 13, 2002. <http://www.nytimes.com/2002/09/14/us/threats-responses-democrats-democrats-wary-war-iraq-also-worry-about-battling.html?scp=12&sq=John+Kerry%2C+Iraq&st=nyt> (accessed 30 April 2010).

⁶⁵ Christopher Marquis, "The War Wagon: Democrats Play the Loyal Opposition," *New York Times Online* September 22, 2002 <http://www.nytimes.com/2002/09/22/weekinreview/the-world-the-war-wagon-democrats-play-the-loyal-opposition.html?scp=14&sq=John+Kerry%2C+Iraq&st=nyt> (accessed 15 April 2010).

⁶⁶ CNN, "Election Results: Senate," *CNN.com* 2002. <http://www.cnn.com/ELECTION/2002/pages/senate/index.html> (accessed 5 May 2010).

The midterm elections affected the Democratic Senators' votes for the resolution. Two close Senate races involving Democratic incumbents support this contention: Missouri and South Dakota. Missouri was especially important for both political parties since it could determine which party controlled the Senate. Incumbent Missouri Senator Jean Carnahan publicly supported Bush's resolution and voted for it in October. Her public pronouncement of support for the President indicated she understood the implications of opposing Bush.⁶⁷ She lost to Republican Jim Talent 49%-50%.⁶⁸ Despite the negative results, voting against a popular President's initiative in such a close race still would have been more risky than voting for it. South Dakota Senator Tim Johnson narrowly defeated challenger John Thune by just over 500 votes, which also indicated a tough campaign.⁶⁹ In this Senate race, national security and Iraq played a role. During the campaign, challenger Thune accused Johnson of being weak on defense.⁷⁰ Voting against the President would confirm that accusation. Johnson voted for the resolution realizing the implications of voting against the President.⁷¹ The three incumbent Democratic Senators who voted against the resolution overwhelmingly defeated their challengers: Senator Levin, Michigan (61%-38%), Senator Reed, Rhode Island (78%-22%), and Senator Durbin, Illinois (60%-38%).⁷² Since they were powerful incumbents in their states, they were able to vote against the resolution without electoral repercussions.

⁶⁷ Carl Hulse, "Candidates in Tough Races Seem Mindful of Political Repercussions of Stance on Iraq," *New York Times Online*, October 5, 2002.

<http://www.nytimes.com/2002/10/05/us/threats-responses-incumbents-candidates-tough-races-seem-mindful-political.html?scp=42&sq=Senator+Carnahan%2C+Missouri&st=nyt> (accessed 5 May 2010).

⁶⁸ CNN, "Election Results: Senate." United States Senate, "U.S. Senate Roll Call Votes 107th Congress - 2nd Session: On the Joint Resolution (H.J.Res. 114)."

⁶⁹ CNN, "Election Results: Senate."

⁷⁰ Hulse, "Candidates in Tough Races Seem Mindful of Political Repercussions of Stance on Iraq."

⁷¹ United States Senate, "U.S. Senate Roll Call Votes 107th Congress - 2nd Session: On the Joint Resolution (H.J.Res. 114)."

⁷² CNN, "Election Results: Senate."

The 2002 House of Representatives Congressional elections had a similar theme. There were 435 Congressional seats at stake in the 2002 elections. Of the 435, CNN.com identified 32 districts they considered “Hot House Races” because the campaigns indicated it was going to be a close race and the results could determine the balance of power in the House of Representatives.⁷³ Nineteen of the 32 “Hot” districts in contention involved incumbents from both political parties: 11 Republicans and eight Democrats. Nine Republicans voted for the President’s resolution and two voted against it. Of the latter two, Congressman Leach of Iowa easily regained his seat. Of note, however, was Maryland Congresswoman Constance Morella. She voted against the resolution and lost her seat to Democrat Christopher Van Hollen 47%-52%.⁷⁴ Pundits predicted this would be a close race.⁷⁵ The 5% margin, however, indicates a manifestation of the political repercussions of voting against the President’s resolution in a state adjacent to Washington, D.C.⁷⁶

In races that involved Democratic incumbents, two in particular stood out. The first involved Florida District 5 Congresswoman Karen Thurman, who lost her seat to Republican Virginia Brown-Waite 46%-48%. The close margin again indicated a tough campaign where a vote against the President’s resolution may have increased the margin even more.⁷⁷ The other race to note was for Connecticut’s 5th Congressional district. Due to the 2000 census, the 5th and 6th district combined to form the new 5th district. The incumbents from both districts, a Republican and a Democrat, ran against each other. Republican Nancy

⁷³ ———, “Election Results: Balance of Power,” *CNN.com* 2002.

<http://www.cnn.com/ELECTION/2002/pages/bop/index.html> (accessed 5 May 2010).

⁷⁴ ———, “Election Results: House of Representatives,” *CNN.com* 2002.

<http://www.cnn.com/ELECTION/2002/pages/house/index.html> (accessed 5 May 2010).

⁷⁵ Hulse, “Candidates in Tough Races Seem Mindful of Political Repercussions of Stance on Iraq.”

⁷⁶ United States House of Representatives, “Final Vote Results for Roll Call 455: To Authorize the Use of United States Armed Forces against Iraq.”

⁷⁷ CNN, “Election Results: House of Representatives.” United States House of Representatives, “Final Vote Results for Roll Call 455: To Authorize the Use of United States Armed Forces against Iraq.”

Johnson voted for the resolution and defeated Democrat Jim Maloney who voted against it. While historically a Republican stronghold, the vote margin (54%-43), the fact that the district voted for Democrat John Kerry in 2004, and Congresswoman Johnson lost by a landslide to a Democrat in 2006 suggests that the President's popularity and Congressman Maloney's vote against the President's Iraq resolution affected the outcome of the election.⁷⁸

The 2004 Presidential elections also provided a backdrop for the Iraq resolution vote.⁷⁹ The Senate in 2002 included six possible Democratic candidates for the Presidency: John Kerry, Joe Biden, John Edwards, Joe Lieberman, Senate majority leader Tom Daschle, and Hillary Clinton. Kerry and Daschle were the President's most outspoken critics leading up to the vote on the resolution. Senator Kerry, who would run against Bush in 2004, was the President's harshest critic. He accused Bush of letting his Iraq "rhetoric get way ahead of his thinking."⁸⁰ In early September, Kerry wrote that the President had not presented enough evidence to the American people and Congress to prove the danger Saddam posed to the United States and the rest of the world. He added that Bush had not exhausted every option to avoid making a "unilateral" decision "in going to war with Iraq."⁸¹ Kerry voted for the resolution noting, however, that he wanted only to reinforce the President's ability "to defend the national security of the United States,"

⁷⁸ Polling Report.com, "President Bush - Overall Job Ratings." CNN, "Election Results: House of Representatives." Wikipedia, "Connecticut's 5th Congressional District," http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Connecticut's_5th_congressional_district (accessed 6 May 2010). Bush's approval rating was 67% in 2002 compared to 32% in 2006.

⁷⁹ Mitchell, "Democrats, Wary of War in Iraq, Also Worry About Battling Bush."

⁸⁰ James Dao, "In Attacks on Bush, Kerry Sets Himself Apart," *New York Times Online* July 31, 2002 <http://www.nytimes.com/2002/07/31/us/in-attacks-on-bush-kerry-sets-himself-apart.html?scp=4&sq=John+Kerry%2C+Iraq&st=nyt> (accessed 1 May 2010).

⁸¹ John Kerry, "We Still Have a Choice on Iraq," *New York Times Online*, September 6, 2002. <http://www.nytimes.com/2002/09/06/opinion/we-still-have-a-choice-on-iraq.html?scp=1&sq=John+Kerry%2C+Iraq&st=nyt> (accessed 1 May 2010).

and qualified his support by adding that the resolution did not grant the President authority to impose a regime change in Iraq.⁸²

Biden's criticism of Bush's policy towards Iraq centered on the President's insistence on regime change, saying it might mean the United States would have to be in Iraq for at least five years. He said that there was a reason that the first President Bush decided not to oust Saddam in 1991 when he had the chance. As the resolution debate approached, however, he could only criticize the President's and the Republicans' timing for the vote, implying that the administration was using the Iraq resolution for political gain. He stated, "Some issues are so serious, so important to the United States that they should be taken as far out of the realm of politics as possible."⁸³

John Edwards supported the President's call for a regime change in Iraq saying, "The time has come for decisive action."⁸⁴ Joe Lieberman offered support to the President, but would work with other Senators to make sure that the language in the resolution received the utmost bipartisan support.⁸⁵ Clinton publicly supported the President's call to take out Saddam.⁸⁶ Although she publicly denied running for the Presidency in 2004, supporting the President kept her "political viability" intact, thus setting herself up for a run in 2008.⁸⁷

The vote to support George H.W. Bush's resolution on Iraq prior to the first Gulf War served as a reminder to future Presidential hopefuls on the impact of voting against a "popular" war. Those that voted against

⁸² "Excerpts from Senate Debate on Iraq Policy," *New York Times Online*, October 10, 2002. <http://www.nytimes.com/2002/10/10/us/threats-and-responses-excerpts-from-senate-debate-on-iraq-policy.html?scp=10&sq=John+Kerry%2C+Iraq&st=nyt> (accessed 29 April 2010).

⁸³ Allison Mitchell, "Bush's Address Draws Praise in Congress, but Doubts Linger," *New York Times Online*, September 13, 2002. <http://www.nytimes.com/2002/09/13/us/threats-responses-reaction-washington-bush-s-address-draws-praise-congress-but.html?scp=11&sq=John+Kerry%2C+Iraq&st=nyt> (accessed 1 May 2010).

⁸⁴ Mitchell, "Democrats, Wary of War in Iraq, Also Worry About Battling Bush."

⁸⁵ ———, "Democrats, Wary of War in Iraq, Also Worry About Battling Bush."

⁸⁶ Maureen Dowd, "Can Hillary Upgrade," *New York Times Online*, October 2, 2002. <http://www.nytimes.com/2002/10/02/opinion/can-hillary-upgrade.html?scp=15&sq=John+Kerry%2C+Iraq&st=nyt> (accessed 1 May 2010).

⁸⁷ Dowd, "Can Hillary Upgrade."

the first Gulf War lost their political viability. Political pundits noted that only those Democrats who endorsed the 1990 Iraq war have succeeded or have made it on the Presidential ticket since.⁸⁸ Thus, Democratic Presidential hopefuls were aware of the impact of voting against a popular President regarding a war that most people believed would be a clear victory for the United States. In addition, during the first Gulf War, the Democrats split on support for President George H.W. Bush, with the majority voting against it and thus highlighting “doubts about the Democrats’ strength on national security.”⁸⁹ This is why many of them either supported the President outright or toned down their criticism lest they appear “soft on defense.”⁹⁰ Plans for the Presidency, therefore, ensured that powerful Democratic Senators supported Bush on his Iraq resolution.

Although Bush had publicly stated since early 2002 that his policy in Iraq was regime change, the public debates that ensued within the administration in August demonstrated to the American people, Saddam Hussein, and the international community that the United States did not have a coherent strategy for Iraq.⁹¹ When he spoke at the UN in September, he implored the Security Council to write a resolution ordering Saddam to disarm. He said that the resolution must have language authorizing the UN to use military force if Saddam did not comply with the resolution. He also implied that if the UN did not act, the world organization would lose its viability within the international community.⁹² Less than a week after his speech at the United Nations, he presented Congress with a resolution authorizing him to use force against Iraq if it became necessary.

⁸⁸ Mitchell, "Democrats, Wary of War in Iraq, Also Worry About Battling Bush."

⁸⁹ ———, "Democrats, Wary of War in Iraq, Also Worry About Battling Bush."

⁹⁰ Metz, *Iraq and the Evolution of American Strategy*, 127.

⁹¹ Haass, *War of Necessity, War of Choice: A Memoir of Two Iraq Wars*, 202-323.

⁹² Bush, "Address to the United Nations General Assembly in New York City, September 12, 2002."

The President's Democratic critics questioned the timing of the vote. One of their criticisms was that it was too close to the midterm elections and it looked like it was simply a political move.⁹³ The other was that it did not give the United Nations enough time to deliberate on a resolution against Iraq. Bush pushed the issue with Congress, saying, "If I were running for office, I [am] not sure how I [would] explain to the American people why Congress was failing to act while waiting for the United Nations to act."⁹⁴

This section has illustrated that the Bush administration was comprised of shrewd politicians who used the Iraq war debate to bolster the President's credibility with three different audiences. They accelerated the timing of the resolution vote in order to limit opposition and guarantee overwhelming support for it. First, he understood that without Congressional support, the UN would not act on his call for a new resolution against Iraq. Delaying a Congressional vote until after the November elections would also delay UN action until after the New Year, which would have eased pressure on the UN to act and give Hussein time to mount a challenge. Second, his credibility with Hussein was at stake and he did not want to jeopardize Congress' support by waiting until after the midterms. Finally, his credibility with the American people was at stake. He had been talking about the danger Hussein's regime posed to the American people since after the 9/11 attacks and had talked about regime change to remove this danger. If he could not convince Congress to give him the authority to use military force against Hussein, it threatened his ability to execute his strategy for victory in the war on terror since Iraq played a significant role in that strategy.

⁹³ Mitchell, "Bush's Address Draws Praise in Congress, but Doubts Linger."

⁹⁴ As cited in David E. Sanger, "Bush Is Doubtful Iraq Will Comply with U.N Demands," *New York Times Online*, September 14, 2002. <http://www.nytimes.com/2002/09/14/world/threats-responses-president-bush-doubtful-iraq-will-comply-with-un-demands.html?scp=6&sq=John+Edwards%2C+Iraq&st=nyt> (accessed 2 May 2010).

Did Saddam Hussein React to the Debate in the United States?

Iraq has no interest in war. No Iraqi official or ordinary citizen has expressed a wish to go to war. The question should be directed to the other side. Are they looking for a pretext so they could justify war against Iraq?

Saddam Hussein
Interview with Tony Benn, February 4, 2003

The invitation to struggle perspective is a subset of diversionary theory and strategic conflict avoidance. Proponents of this theoretical perspective argue that adversaries are motivated to challenge the US militarily when they recognize the President's political weakness. Congressional opposition against a President's policies manifests this weakness. This section analyzes events surrounding the Bush administration's Iraq policy from late spring 2002 until October 2002, when both Houses of Congress voted and approved the resolution submitted by the administration authorizing the President to use US armed forces against Iraq. Further, it attempts to determine whether Hussein reacted to events in the US when Bush's Iraq policy lacked clarity and was often questioned and criticized by Congressional leaders. I limited the study to this six-month period because it was a critical time for the Bush administration given that they had not yet established their policy for dealing with Hussein and the Iraqi issue. Once Congress approved the resolution, only the international community had enough clout to stop US military action against Iraq. There was sufficient support for Bush's policy from the American public and Congress, the only domestic body that had would have been able to stop the President from attacking Iraq.

Bush and his inner circle received constant criticism from the media, retired senior military officers, and most importantly for the purposes of the argument presented in this paper, from Congress.

Members of both houses of Congress who opposed Bush questioned the administration's timing and method for dealing with Iraq. Hussein purportedly constantly monitored Western news networks like CNN and the BBC and was aware of the division between the opposition and the President.⁹⁵ Evidence from media reports, along with statements from the Iraqi foreign ministry and Hussein himself, show that the Iraqi President challenged the US when there was public opposition to Bush's Iraq policy, especially when it came from members of the US Congress. However, Hussein's military lacked the strength to attack the US. Instead, he used diplomatic means and the media to challenge President Bush in the lead-up to the Iraq war. In addition, he used the UN and the UN weapons inspections process to undermine Bush and the US.

Although Bush announced a new preemptive approach against tyrants in his speech to the graduating class of the US Military Academy in June 2002, by July the Bush administration still lacked a clear policy on Iraq. In an embarrassing display of confusion and division within the administration, key officials and retired senior military officers spent most of July and August publicly debating their positions in the news media.⁹⁶ Most policymakers agreed that Iraq eventually needed a regime change, but key decision makers in the Bush administration argued about whether or not the threat Hussein posed necessitated an immediate decision to use US military force to topple the strongman. Secretary of State Colin Powell publicly supported involving the UN in any decision the US made about Iraq. The other camp, which included

⁹⁵ Johanna Mcgeary, J.F.O. McAllister, Scott MacLeod, Massimo Calabresi, Mark Thompson, and Andrew Purvis, "Inside Saddam's World," *Time* May 13, 2002. <http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,1002403,00.html> (accessed 30 April 2010).

⁹⁶ Denise von Hermann, "Presidential Decision-Making: Three Models and the Road to War with Iraq," in *Presidential Policies and the Road to the Second Iraq War*, ed. John Davis (Burlington, VT: Ashgate Publishing Co., 2006), 22-23. Michael Duffy, Massimo Calabresi, Mark Thompson, and Scott MacLeod, "Decoding the Headlines About Iraq," *Time* July 22, 2002. <http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,1002894,00.html> (accessed 1 April 2010).

Rumsfeld, Cheney, and Rice, wanted unilateral military action. The Senate Committee on Foreign Relations attempted to help the administration clarify its position and policy by calling a hearing to examine the Iraqi threat and possible policy options. The purpose, according to Chairman Senator Biden, was to initiate a “national dialog on Iraq that sheds more light than heat and helps inform the American people so that we can have a more informed basis upon which they can draw their own conclusions.”⁹⁷

Hussein used this opportunity to shape the debate. Through a series of public statements and diplomatic moves, the Iraqi government challenged the US during this critical period as the Americans tried to clarify their policy. First, on July 4, Iraq reopened discussions with the UN regarding reinstating arms inspections in Iraq to comply with resolutions dating back to the end of the first Gulf War. The Iraqi foreign minister, Naji Sabri, attempted to thwart US policy by using the opportunity to protest US threats to topple Hussein.⁹⁸

From July 31 to August 1, the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations held two days of hearings to determine the threat and weigh policy options for Iraq. At the same time, Hussein called on the UN to shape the debate in the US. On July 31, Hussein attempted to use the UN to undermine US military forces operating in Operations NORHTERN and SOUTHERN WATCH. First, Sabri sent a letter to UN Secretary General Kofi Annan protesting US and British “flagrant aggression” and “blatant violation” of Iraqi “sovereignty, territorial integrity and political independence.”⁹⁹ The letter also included an invitation to chief UN

⁹⁷ United States Congress, *United States Policy toward Iraq: Hearing before the United States Congress House of Representatives Committee on Armed Services*, 1-2.

⁹⁸ "U.N. And Iraq Discuss Arms Inspection," *New York Times*, July 5, 2002, <http://www.nytimes.com/2002/07/05/world/un-and-iraq-discuss-arms-inspections.html?scp=8&sq=Iraq&st=nyt> (1 April 2010).

⁹⁹ Iraq Ministry of Foreign Affairs, "Foreign Minister Sends Letter to Annan, July 31, 2002,"

inspector, Hans Blix, for technical talks with Iraqi officials with a view to resuming the inspections. The US dismissed the offer, but the media reported the “ruse”, which was intended to influence the debate in the US by offering weapons inspections. Weapons of mass destruction and inspections were topics of discussion during the committee hearings and used by Bush administration officials as justification for attacking Iraq and removing Hussein from power.¹⁰⁰

Hussein’s media attack and diplomatic efforts against the US continued throughout August when the debate in the US over the Bush administration’s policy started to gather momentum. In a speech given on August 8, Hussein said any attack on Iraq would be “doomed to failure.”¹⁰¹ Hussein used regional allies, Iraqi defectors, and opposition groups outside Iraq with ties to members of the Ba’ath Party to communicate Iraqi strategy should the US invade. The Iraqi leader said he would take the fight into the cities where the Iraqis could negate US advantages while inflicting large numbers of casualties on American troops and Iraqi civilians.¹⁰² Hussein tried to stall US plans for invasion by appealing to the American public, who he believed were averse to heavy American casualties. He also renewed offers to the UN to resume weapons inspections. If the UN had agreed to the Iraqi offer, it would

<http://web.archive.org/web/20020718173320/http://www.uruklink.net/mofa/epage.htm> (accessed 7 May 2010).

¹⁰⁰ United States Congress, *Hearings to Examine Threats, Responses, and Regional Consideration Surrounding Iraq: Hearings before the Committee on Foreign Relations, United States Senate*, 107th Cong., 2nd Sess. (2002). BBC, "Iraq Offers Arms Inspections Talks," *BBC News World Edition* August 2, 2002.

http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/2165948.stm (accessed 15 April 2002). Richard and Suzanne Malveaux Roth, "White House, Expert Skeptical of Iraqi Offer," *CNN.com* August 2, 2002. <http://archives.cnn.com/2002/US/08/02/iraq.weapons/> (accessed 15 April 2010).

¹⁰¹ CNN, "White House Dismissed Hussein's Speech," *CNN.com* August 8, 2002. <http://archives.cnn.com/2002/WORLD/meast/08/08/iraq.saddam/> (accessed 1 April 2010).

¹⁰² Al Jazeera, "President Saddam Hussein's Speech on 8/8/02 and Reactions," *Al Jazeera.com* August 8, 2002. <http://www.aljazeera.com/News%20archives/2002%20News%20archives/August%202002%20News%20Items/Saddam's%20speech%20and%20reactions,%20August%208,%202002.htm> (accessed 1 April 2010).

have removed a vital element of the US rationale for an invasion. Continuing to plan and publicly advocate for an invasion, therefore, would further isolate the US from its allies in Europe and the Middle East, as most disagreed with the American view of the Iraqi threat.¹⁰³ In late August, Sabri led a delegation to China to secure support from a permanent member of the UN Security Council that had been publicly opposed to military action. He followed the trip with a visit to Russia, another permanent member of the Security Council and vocal critic of US policy on Iraq.¹⁰⁴ These were all attempts to undermine the US and shape the debate during a period of policy uncertainty.

Opposition in the US to unilateral action against Iraq increased in late August and September, and the Iraqis attempted to create a divide between the President and Congress. Dr. Sadoun Hammadi, Speaker of Iraq's National Assembly, sent a letter to US Senators asking them not to take "hasty military action against Iraq."¹⁰⁵ Previously, Hammadi sent letters to members of the US House of Representatives inviting them to Iraq to inspect suspected weapons arms sites. The Congressmen rejected the invitation.¹⁰⁶ Copies of the invitation accompanied the letter Hammadi sent to the Senate.

¹⁰³ Tony Karon, "How Saddam Plans to Thwart Bush," *Time* August 9, 2002.
<http://www.time.com/time/world/article/0,8599,335536,00.html> (accessed 20 April 2010).

¹⁰⁴ Iraq Ministry of Foreign Affairs, "Foreign Minister Meets Chinese Deputy Premier," <http://web.archive.org/web/20020718173320/http://www.uruklink.net/mofa/epage.htm> (accessed 1 May 2010). Iraq Ministry of Foreign Affairs, "Foreign Minister Meets Ivanov," <http://web.archive.org/web/20020718173320/http://www.uruklink.net/mofa/epage.htm> (accessed 1 May 2010).

¹⁰⁵ Iraq Ministry of Foreign Affairs, "Iraq Sends Letter to Us Senate, September 11, 2002," <http://web.archive.org/web/20020718173320/http://www.uruklink.net/mofa/epage.htm> (accessed 23 April 2010).

¹⁰⁶ Barbara and Alison Mitchell Crossette, "Un and Congress Rebuff Iraq's Inspection Invitation," *New York Times*, August 6, 2002.
<http://www.nytimes.com/2002/08/06/world/un-and-congress-rebuff-iraq-s-inspection-invitation.html?scp=1&sq=Hammadi&st=nyt> (accessed 1 May 2010).

Acceding to Congressional and public demands that the administration involve the UN in any action against Iraq, the President spoke to the world organization on September 12, laying out the threat Hussein's weapons of mass destruction posed to America and the rest of the world. He challenged its members to uphold the organization's viability and duties by calling on them to write a tougher resolution demanding that Iraq disarm. Still, some of his harshest critics in the Senate were not convinced. Senate Majority Leader Tom Daschle of South Dakota remarked, "I don't think that the case for a pre-emptive attack has been made conclusively yet."¹⁰⁷ Iraqi leaders tried to negate the impact of Bush's speech by meeting with ministers from European and Arab countries. After meeting with ministers from the Arab countries, Sabri announced that Iraq had decided to allow inspectors back into the country and would soon coordinate the practical terms of the inspections with the UN.¹⁰⁸ The announcement coincided with Bush's draft resolution, which he submitted to Congress for debate and a vote a few days after his UN speech. It was an attempt to "foil US pretexts for aggression" before Congress had the opportunity to vote on the resolution to authorize the President to use military force.¹⁰⁹

Evidence presented here supports the contention that Hussein challenged the US during the critical six-month period in which the Bush administration lacked clarity regarding its Iraq policy. Though most members of Congress agreed that Hussein must eventually be replaced, they questioned the timing and the unilateral means by which the US

¹⁰⁷ Kenneth T. Walsh, "Words of War," *U.S. News and World Report* Septemeber 23, 2002, 35.

¹⁰⁸ BBC, "Iraq, U.N. Agree to Return of Inspections," October 1, 2010. http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/2290748.stm (accessed 1 May 2010).

¹⁰⁹ Iraq Ministry of Foreign Affairs, "A New Phase of Iraq-U.N Relationship Starts: Says Minister of Foreign Affairs, September 19, 2002," <http://web.archive.org/web/20020718173320/http://www.uruklink.net/mofa/epage.htm> (accessed 1 May 2010). Andrea Koppel, John King and Richard Roth, "Iraq Agrees to Weapons Inspections," *CNN.com*, September 17, 2010 <http://archives.cnn.com/2002/WORLD/meast/09/16/iraq.un.letter/> (accessed 1 May 2010).

attempted to accomplish this change. Hussein attempted to influence Congress' opinion through letters and public statements during this period. Iraq's diplomatic overtures towards China and Russia were also an attempt to isolate Bush in the UN and the international community.

Conclusion

The decision to go to war can never be taken lightly. I believe that a foreign policy, especially one that involves the use of force cannot be sustained in America without the informed consent of the ... people.

Senator Joseph Biden
Chairman of the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
July 31, 2002

The debate over this resolution in the Congress was in the finest traditions of American democracy. There is no social or political force greater than a free people united in a common and compelling objective.

President George W. Bush
Upon Signing H.J. Res. 114, October 16, 2002

Clausewitz wrote, “War is merely a continuation of policy by other means ... The political object is the goal, war is a means of reaching it, and means can never be considered in isolation from their purpose.”¹ Traditional interpretation of this passage examines war’s purpose in the international arena. Rarely do strategists interpret the passage to mean gaining domestic influence for the purposes of political gain. Yet, war’s purpose in the domestic realm—or the threat of war as discussed within that realm—is one of the topics through which this thesis has addressed. In doing so, it has attempted to answer the following questions: How does a President use military policy and debate over the policy to influence domestic political rivals? How does a President use military debate to influence international rivals? Finally, President Bush eloquently stated that congressional debate over a President’s policies is “in the finest traditions of American democracy.”² How do rivals view this debate and how do they react to it? This thesis has argued that in

¹ Clausewitz, Howard, and Paret, *On War*, 87.

² Bush, "Statement on Signing the Authorization for Use of Military Force against Iraq Resolution of 2002, October 16, 2002," 1779.

the US, debate over military policy could have several purposes and could result in several effects. The purposes and effects depend upon the interpreter and the perspective through which the interpreter chooses to view the events.

This work used three of four theoretical perspectives to examine the debate that ensued in the summer and fall prior to the US invasion of Iraq. It only used three of the four because two (diversionary theory and strategic conflict avoidance) are related and only diversionary theory pertained to the Iraq debate.

The first perspective was the diversionary theory of war. According to this theory, a President uses war to engender support in order to divert attention from economic problems prior to key elections. Former Clinton staffer Joe Lockhart accused President Bush and the Republican Party of using the Iraq debate to divert attention from the country's economic troubles. As the Afghanistan campaign wound down and the 9/11 rally effect waned in the spring and summer 2002, economic woes began to affect American public sentiment. Taking into account the traditional Democratic strength on the economy, along with the lack of distrust toward the Republicans following the Enron scandal, the Democrats were able to gain in the polls, leading to Republican concerns about the November midterm elections.

Evidence shows that the Republicans used the Iraq debate to influence the American electorate. As the summer turned to fall, the Bush administration and the Republicans were able to turn the topic back to Iraq and the war on terror. The President and his staff used every opportunity to sell the Iraq war, pointing out the threat Hussein posed to the world. Bush spoke at the UN and more importantly presented a resolution, pushing Congress to debate and pass it in October, before to the midterm elections. The strategy seemed to work as the Republicans regained their lead and the Americans turned to Party candidates to solve the US foreign policy issue, a traditional Republican

strongpoint. Republican candidates did well in the elections and for the first time in history, a sitting President's political party was able to win both Houses in the midterm elections during his first term.

The second perspective examined was coercive democracy theory. The first characteristic of a democracy is that the desire to gain or remain in political power motivates members of political parties. Their actions and policies are intended to achieve those objectives. Second, opposition parties increase the President's credibility when they support his policies, but they also preserve a long-term advantage of their own for voting on the "right" side of a given issue.

Bush administration strategists were shrewd politicians. They also understood that Bush needed the boost the credibility of his threats to take action against Iraq so he could convince the UN to vote on a stronger resolution against Hussein, and to coerce Hussein into giving up his weapons of mass destruction. In order to do this, Bush needed congressional support.

Therefore, the Bush administration accelerated the debate over the resolution he presented to Congress, effectively limiting opposition and guaranteeing that both houses passed it with an overwhelming majority. By pushing the resolution debate and vote prior to the midterm elections, Bush was able to influence Democrats to vote for the resolution even though most disagreed with immediate military action against Iraq. This was especially evident in the Senate races. Incumbent Democrats in close elections with Republicans voted for the resolution. The only Democrats who voted against the resolution were powerful in their states, had secure districts and no future Presidential aspirations, and soundly defeated their Republican challengers. Therefore, they were able to vote their conscience without any repercussion.

Though not as clear-cut, the House of Representatives elections showed that the Democrats had the same tendency to vote for the resolution. The case of Congresswoman Morella, an incumbent

Republican from Maryland who voted against the resolution, illustrates the political implications of voting against a popular President's foreign policy issue. She lost decisively to a Democratic challenger despite pundits' prediction that it would be a close race.

Some argue that the President did not need to ask Congress to support his resolution, stating that he already had the constitutional mandate to use military force to defend the US against a clear and present danger to US national security. However, asking the Congress to vote on the resolution ensured publicity, thus influencing powerful Democratic Senators, who aspired to the Presidency, to vote for the resolution to ensure they maintained future political relevancy. History illustrated that those Democrats who voted against a "sure" military victory lost viability since they were viewed as soft on national security. For example, the only successful Democrats to make the Presidential ticket since the last Iraq vote strongly supported President George H.W. Bush's resolution in 1990.

Bush needed this vote and public support to improve his credibility. Since the beginning of the year, he had been calling for a regime change in Iraq. Throughout the summer of 2002, however, his administration's policy lacked clarity and was subject to criticism that threatened his ability to act militarily when required. Congress' support publicly announced that the Bush administration had a viable policy and that the President had the political capital to follow through with it. In addition, Bush tried to push the UN into passing a stronger resolution against Iraq. Without congressional support, which might not be guaranteed depending on the results of the midterm elections, Bush would not have had the credibility to push the UN into passing another resolution to force Iraq to disarm.

The third and final perspective examined was the invitation to struggle theory. Proponents of this perspective argue that rivals view opposition and debate over a President's policy as a sign of weakness.

They argue that rivals believe it shows the President lacks the political capital to follow through with the policy. Therefore, they confront the President militarily during this period of political “weakness”. Evidence shows that during summer and early fall 2002, a period of confusion and criticism in the US relating to Bush’s Iraq policy, Hussein challenged the US. Since he did not have the military strength, Hussein used diplomatic means to do so. He attempted to shape the debate in the US by negotiating with the UN over arms inspections of its weapons of mass destruction, which was the reason Bush used to advocate waging war against Iraq. In addition, Iraqi leaders wrote letters to Congressmen and Senators to influence their votes and encourage opposition to the President’s policy. They continued their strategy all the way through to March 2003, but the thesis argues that unless the UN stepped in, it would be almost impossible to stop the Iraq war once Bush received the support he needed from Congress. Prior to that, however, Hussein still had a chance to shape the debate to stop the momentum that eventually led to his downfall.

Overall assessment of the argument

Diversionary theory and the idea that a President would endanger the lives of American service members for political gain are controversial. It is also a cynical view of Presidents and political parties, especially in a country that glorifies the virtues of democracy. The economic conditions, survey data from public opinion polls, and the midterm election results supports the diversionary theory perspective regarding the 2002 debate over the Bush administration’s Iraq policy. The evidence suggests that the Republican Party benefitted when the Americans’ focus shifted from economic issues to Iraq. However, other factors, not analyzed here, could have affected the polls and the American electorate’s attitude prior to the 2002 elections. Therefore, future researchers could look into these other factors such as the impact of 9/11 and the President’s popularity

on the 2002 elections. Did the 9/11 rally effect carry to November 2002, over a year after the 9/11 attacks? What other factors affected people's votes in the 2002 midterms?

Second, the evidence presented in this work supports the argument that Hussein challenged the President during a period of confusion and constant Congressional and media criticism. His diplomatic and media efforts were an attempt to shape the debate in the US and an attempt to complicate the Bush administration's efforts to build a coalition against Iraq. However, there was not enough resources and evidence to determine Hussein's motivations with certainty. Thus, future researchers could delve deeper into Iraqi and US archives to investigate the rationale behind Hussein's actions during this critical period in the making of US Iraq policy.

The most convincing case in this work is the credibility argument. The President and his staff understood that he needed to be credible in order to coerce Hussein to agree to disarm and to prove that he had the domestic political support to be able to act on his threats. The only way he was going to achieve that support was to accelerate the debate and vote over the resolution. Pushing the debate prior to the elections enabled Bush to influence the Democrats' vote and ensure that the resolution received overwhelming Congressional support. Who would vote against a popular President's foreign policy and expect to win an election just over a year after the September 11 attacks? Publicizing the debate also guaranteed that Democratic Senators, who were powerful players in Washington D.C., and some of whom aspired for the Presidency, overwhelmingly supported the resolution. Waiting for the resolution debate until after the elections would have delayed the debate until after the new Congress was in place after the New Year. Thus, Bush would not have been able to pressure the UN for a new resolution and, more importantly, he would have jeopardized the overwhelming

support he needed to demonstrate his credibility to Hussein, the American public, and the international community.

The conclusions in this thesis will not help the future strategist develop a strategy to defeat the Taliban or develop a strategy to achieve victory in the struggle against Islamic extremism. In fact, the key takeaway for the future strategist is to understand the political and military contexts of any military policy and how important they are in determining the policy's viability. Will the American people support the policy? Will the President have the political backing in the US to be able to follow through? Though it is not in the traditional realm of the military officer to consider these issues, good strategists will consider them in order to help senior leaders develop a strategy that is practical, possible, and credible.

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